

Testimony on HB 4161
February 14, 2024

Chair Neron; Vice Chairs Hudson and Wright; Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Efren Zamudio, and I have the pleasure of advocating on behalf of the Oregon School Boards Association and our locally elected volunteer school board members across the state.

I am here to share OSBA's concerns and opposition to HB 4161.

OSBA has and will continue to defend the promise of a free public education for each student.

We need our state leaders, our local boards, the people who work in schools, and families and community members to lock arms and do all we can to support our students--our future. To create an education system that lives up to our values of academic excellence and student-centered service.

We must bring resources into our system to create high-quality learning environments to achieve this. OSBA is concerned that HB 4161 will take resources from our local districts with the "Education Savings Account" concept, a slippery slope to a voucher system that moves us away from the promise of a free, public education accountable to the public.

Our school districts are held to a different standard than charter schools. Charter schools receive state funding but are not required to do most of the reporting our districts are required to do. Evaluating all of the transparency, reporting, and local budget laws charter schools should be accountable for with Oregonians' tax dollars is a critical first step before any discussion on the intent of HB 4161.

Finally, a virtual charter school has different expenses and fixed costs than a brick-and-mortar school, particularly with facilities and infrastructure. Again, before any discussion on the intent of HB 4161, we have to answer these questions to ensure equitable funding for the service our schools provide in educating Oregon's students.

We are also concerned on the impact open enrollment in HB 4161 could have on our small, rural districts.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today; I am happy to answer questions.