



Representative Hoa Nguyen  
Oregon House District 48

SB 749 - PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PILOT PROGRAM

**3/24 Senate Committee on Education**

Thank you, Chair, vice chair and members of the committee. I am State Representative Hoa Nguyen, and I represent House District 48, which includes outer Southeast Portland and North Clackamas County.

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 749, which seeks to establish a pilot program for participatory budgeting in Oregon's public schools. This initiative promises to empower students, enhance civic engagement, and foster a more inclusive and democratic school environment.

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process that allows community members, including students, to directly decide how to allocate a portion of a public budget. By involving students in budgeting decisions, we provide them with real-world experiences in democracy, teaching them the importance of dialogue, consensus-building, and public interest. This hands-on approach contrasts with traditional civic education methods, offering tangible outcomes that students can witness and take pride in.

Implementing PB in schools serves as a powerful civic education tool. Unlike theoretical lessons, PB allows students to experience firsthand how their involvement can lead to concrete changes within their school community. This active participation has been shown to increase students' understanding of democratic processes and their role as citizens, fostering a sense of responsibility and engagement that can extend beyond their school years.

Participatory budgeting strengthens the school community by fostering positive relationships between students and the administration. It demonstrates the benefits of involvement, encouraging students to take an active role in their education and school environment. This collaborative

approach can lead to improved school climates and a greater sense of ownership and pride among students.

The effectiveness of participatory budgeting in schools is not merely theoretical. For instance, the Phoenix Union High School District in Arizona successfully implemented PB, allowing students to decide on the allocation of district-wide funds. This initiative not only empowered students but also led to projects that directly addressed their needs and interests, demonstrating the practical benefits of such programs.

By passing Senate Bill 749, Oregon has the opportunity to lead in fostering democratic engagement among youth, empowering students to take an active role in shaping their educational environments. This pilot program represents a forward-thinking approach to education, one that prepares our students to be informed, engaged, and responsible citizens.

I urge the committee to support SB 749 and invest in the future of our students and our democracy.

Thank you for considering this important initiative.