

Submitter: Eddy Morales  
On Behalf Of: City Councilor Eddy Morales  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB749

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Eddy Morales, and I serve as a City Councilor in Gresham. I am writing in strong support of SB 749, the School Participatory Budgeting Act.

This bill would launch a \$500,000 pilot program that empowers students to decide how to invest in their schools. It's an innovative civic learning model—and one I've seen work firsthand.

In Gresham, we've already proven what happens when we take youth engagement seriously. A few years ago, I helped launch EMOPI—the East Multnomah Outreach Prevention Intervention program—in collaboration with then-Councilor and now Commissioner Vince Jones Dixon. EMOPI was designed to reduce youth gun violence by connecting young people to mentorship, education, and leadership opportunities. And it's working. We've seen measurable reductions in youth violence because we gave our young people meaningful roles in shaping safer, more supportive communities.

SB 749 builds on that same philosophy: that when young people are heard, engaged, and empowered, they rise to the challenge. Participatory budgeting gives students a chance to “learn democracy by doing”—through a structured, hands-on process of developing proposals, debating ideas, and voting to fund real projects that matter to them. Whether it's shaded outdoor seating, music programs, or water stations, students take ownership over their school environment and their future.

This approach is especially needed now. Oregon ranks among the lowest in the nation in education outcomes, and our young people—still recovering from the disruptions of COVID—are facing declining attendance and graduation rates. They need not just more resources, but more power.

SB 749 is a smart investment in our classrooms, our communities, and our democracy. It strengthens youth-adult partnerships, fosters civic participation, and teaches skills that extend far beyond the classroom—collaboration, budgeting, public speaking, problem-solving. Students become more connected, more confident, and more committed to their education and communities.

I urge this committee to pass SB 749 and give students across Oregon the

opportunity to lead, learn, and thrive.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to young people across our state.

Sincerely,  
Eddy Morales  
Gresham City Councilor