

RE: Support SB 749, Senate Committee on Education

03/26/2025

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

My name is Rahel Teka, and I am Director of Strategic Communications at [The Participatory Budgeting Project](#). Our organization supports communities across North America to learn about, implement, and improve participatory budgeting (or PB) and other forms of community led decision-making.

I am writing in support of SB 749 - an important opportunity to give young people in Oregon real power over real decisions that impact their lives - shaping a generation committed to and directly invested in real democracy, beyond elections.

During the PB process, students and other school community members make budgeting decisions through a cycle of meetings and voting. Based on information and data, students and school stakeholders brainstorm project ideas, develop full proposals, and vote on projects to fund.

PB has been called “revolutionary civics in action” and that’s because PB offers a hands-on way to develop and strengthen lifelong civic participation. Young people who have taken part in PB processes report being more likely to vote in elections, more comfortable engaging with their elected officials and other formal decision makers, and more confident in their ability to meaningfully take part in their community and civic life.

We have seen the impacts of school PB across the US, including:

- Phoenix, AZ where a single school process grew into district wide participatory budgeting – including parents and school staff – building a sense of connection across the district community.
- Brooklyn, NY - where consistent PB in many schools across the district has helped officials note and implement important budget priorities and meet the needs of students, even when project that don't win the PB vote, and allowing for [longer term learnings about how to further equity](#) in budgeting decisions.
- Central Falls, RI - where school PB has been piloted and expanded - leading to a fundamental shift in parent and student engagement investment in their school communities, including proactive engagement in improvements. In fact, research

found that after participating PB community members reported [“double-digit increases in their likelihood to voice concerns to a local official”](#).

Schools and school districts, and colleges around the world are using participatory budgeting (PB) to engage students, parents, educators, and staff in deciding how to spend a part of the school budget. School PB develops student leadership, supports student and school success, lifts up student and family voice, and involves the entire school in meaningful civic experiences.

The School Participatory Budgeting Act is an investment in young people, in the long term health of our democracy. As a representative of The Participatory Budgeting Project, we ask that you please support SB 749 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

Rahel Tekla

Director of Strategic Communications, Participatory Budgeting Project