

RE: HB 2583

Esteemed members of the Oregon House Education Committee,

Thank you for holding a public hearing on HB 2583 on Wednesday, April 2. I appreciate your time and attention to this important issue, and I want to acknowledge the overwhelming support the bill received through both written and verbal testimony.

While a few concerns were raised during the hearing, I would like to provide some clarification on those points:

District Budget Constraints

It is true that districts are currently navigating tight budget timelines and facing funding uncertainties. However, the upcoming deadline for Student Investment Account (SIA) applications will have passed long before HB 2583 could become law. This means virtual public charter schools would not be eligible to apply for SIA funding until the 2026-2027 school year, providing districts ample time to plan and adjust for any changes. In the short term, any financial impact to districts would be negligible.

Impact on SIA Fund Distribution

Virtual public charter school students comprise less than 3 percent of Oregon's total public school enrollment, due in large part to the existing enrollment cap. As such, any shift in funding would be minimal, what many might describe as a rounding error.

It is also important to clarify that HB 2583 does not guarantee funding to community based Oregon online charter schools. The bill simply permits them to apply for SIA funds. These schools must still undergo the same rigorous application process as all other public schools and receive approval from the Oregon Department of Education before any funds are awarded. This ensures that SIA dollars are distributed responsibly and equitably.

During the hearing, opponents argued that including virtual schools would "thin the funding soup." That analogy, frankly, is a poor one. The reality is that some public schools, specifically community based virtual charter schools, are not getting any soup under the current law. They are not allowed at the table, regardless of the need or impact they demonstrate. HB 2583 seeks to right that wrong by creating an equitable opportunity to apply for funding that supports student success.

Consideration in a Broader Charter School Funding Study

While a broader review of charter school funding is certainly needed, it is essential that we address the immediate funding inequity faced by virtual schools. Delaying access to SIA funds while waiting for a longer term study only prolongs disparities for students who rely on this model of education. Achieving basic funding parity should be a priority now, not later.

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Thank you again for your leadership and your commitment to equitable educational opportunities for all Oregon students. I respectfully urge you to ***support HB 2583*** and move it forward for a vote.

Sincerely,

Brad Linn
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