

February 24, 2022

Senate Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature

Re: Support for SB 1552—Removes requirement that student must receive approval from resident school district before enrolling in virtual public charter school not sponsored by school district, etc.

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Committee:

I am Executive Vice President at Cascade Policy Institute, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public policy research organization based in Portland. Since 1991, Cascade has supported expanding education options for Oregon students. We also run a privately funded scholarship program for Oregon elementary children, the Children's Scholarship Fund-Oregon.

I write in support of Senate Bill 1552, which repeals the three percent cap on students from any school district who can enroll in virtual public charter schools not sponsored by their district. This bill would increase public education options at a time when Oregon children most need academic support.

During the COVID-19 pandemic school closures, many Oregon parents tried new schools, resources, and education approaches to keep their children learning. In the process, many have discovered fresh perspectives on how their students learn best and what would support them most successfully in the future. These experiences are motivating parents and students to seek more options in K-12 education.

Public charter school enrollment in Oregon increased almost 21% between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years. Charter schools that are successfully educating students—and therefore popular with families—should be able to respond to demonstrated demand from Oregon parents.

As our state moves forward from the COVID-19 pandemic, Oregon education policies should value all options that empower students to achieve academic proficiency. We can serve all students better by increasing—not limiting—education options available to meet children's learning needs, goals, and personal circumstances.

I respectfully urge you to pass SB 1552 out of committee.

Sincerely,

/s/ Kathryn Hickok

Kathryn Hickok
Executive Vice President

