

QuickPoint! – Lift the Cap on Oregon Charter Schools

By Eric Fruits, Ph.D.

Next week is National Charter Schools Week. Oregon passed charter school legislation in 1999, and today, families can choose from more than 130 charter schools for their students.

During the pandemic, enrollment in online charter schools skyrocketed and interest remains strong. So much, in fact, that many charters now have a waiting list. But, why are there waiting lists?

Simple. The legislature set an arbitrary cap on the number of students that can be enrolled in charter schools. That cap stands in the way of many students enrolling in charters.

The entrenched public education establishment does not like charter schools. Teachers' unions in particular hate charters because many of the schools do not have collective bargaining agreements with the unions.

What they forget—or choose to ignore—is the fact that charter schools are public schools. They just operate differently. Those differences are what make charters so attractive. COVID-19 gave families a chance to explore alternatives to traditional brick-and-mortar public schools. Many families found the experiment was successful.

It's time to lift the state caps on charter school enrollment. Lifting the cap imposes no obligations on families or schools. It merely opens up options.

No one walks into Baskin-Robbins 31 Flavors and says, "I wish they had only one flavor." If we welcome choice in something as trivial as ice cream, we should demand choice in something as important as education.

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