



OREGON COALITION OF COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOLS

April 20, 2020

TO: Colt Gill, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Oregon Department of Education
CC: Lindsay Capps, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Oregon Senate and House Committees on Education, Oregon Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response
FROM: The Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools (ORC3S)

Deputy Superintendent Gill,

The Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools (ORC3S) supports and represents community based charter schools throughout Oregon. As a coalition we are working diligently to support public charter schools as we all navigate the new "Distance Learning for All" landscape we find ourselves in due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an organization we are providing schools with analysis and access to Oregon Department of Education updates on implementing "Distance Learning for All" and updates from the US Congress and affiliated agencies on federal stimulus/relief programs that may help Oregon's public charter schools weather this storm.

As a coalition we understand how challenging this new environment is. We want to engage as partners to ensure that the best available information and resources are used to make decisions during this period of time, whether those are decisions by schools and districts on how to support students and families or by ODE on implementing Distance Learning for All and keeping our schools whole and able to continue operations. We are committed to ensuring that Oregon's students have access to the educational resources they need right now.

Oregon's charter schools have, since their inception in 1999, faced significant hurdles related to financial sustainability due to the state's charter school funding model. A 2015 analysis from ECONorthwest (commissioned by the Chalkboard Project) found that "Per student (based on Weighted Average Daily Membership) charter schools receive funding that is equivalent to 63% of the funding available to all district-run schools statewide. When just "host districts" and the charter schools within those host districts are considered charter schools receive funding that is equivalent to 58% of the funding available to the host district-run schools."

This information is particularly relevant right now, given the Oregon Department of Education's release of guidance (dated April 11, 2020) establishing that "for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, ADMw for all public schools will be based on 2nd period data (December)..." This decision means that public schools and public charter schools will not receive funding for students who enrolled after December 31, 2019.

The winter break period is traditionally when the majority of students who desire a school transfer do so. That transfer may be from one district run school to another, from a district run school to a brick & mortar public charter school, or into a virtual school. Information from our public charter schools indicates that the most significant increases in enrollment occur in January and February of a school year. By determining 2nd term funding allocations using a date which is prior to the second term of the school year, our public charter schools

will see an outsized negative impact as compared to their district peer schools. ***Districts operate with budgets that are more able to absorb the impact of the transfer of even 20 students, while the impact of 5 students transferring in on a single public charter school can mean the ability to retain critical educators.***

We believe that a sensible approach to this problem is to identify a date prior to Executive Order 20-08 implementation (we suggest March 2nd, 2020) to utilize for State School Fund allocation determinations. March 2nd, 2020 is the last date of information available on January and February 2020 enrollment. Utilizing this date, and no date beyond that, would ensure that “true transfers” of students are captured and not any transfers potentially related to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or the Executive Order 20-08. ODE has the data to make this possible and taking this action would ensure that our state’s public charter school students continue to have access to the educators, support services, and materials they need to thrive during this challenging period of time.

As a coalition of community based, community centered schools we can appreciate the challenges the state, and ODE, are facing in light of our massive disruption in public education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are eager to be partners in the work of ensuring all Oregon students have access to quality educational options right now and we take a firm stand that public charter schools should not be recruiting and enrolling students during our current school/campus closures. Our public charters do commit to serving our students and assisting our host (and non-host) districts in serving all of our students and families.

We look forward to continuing this conversation with ODE, our legislators, and the Governor’s office.

Sincerely,

Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools board of directors:

Jon Bullock
Board president
Executive Director, Redmond Proficiency Academy

Stephani Walker
Board secretary
Executive Director, Arthur Academy

Brian Sien
Board treasurer
Principal, Clackamas Middle College

Amy Fredrickson
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