

June 2, 2017

Testimony in Opposition to HB 2720 A

by Steve Buckstein, Cascade Policy Institute

Co-Chairs Monroe and Smith Warner and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education:

I'm Steve Buckstein, Senior Policy Analyst and Founder of Cascade Policy Institute, a public policy research center based in Portland. I'm writing in opposition to [HB 2720 A](#) which would require the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to conduct a study on virtual public charter schools.

My major points of opposition second those of Dr. David Gray, Executive Director of the Metro East Web Academy. He "...served in traditional public education for over 30 years as a state department executive, superintendent, assistant superintendent, National Blue Ribbon School Principal, and a state and nationally recognized teacher." In [his written testimony](#) submitted on March 3rd he stated, in part:

"I share your passion for public education...Unfortunately, the traditional education system is broken...Traditional systems are effective for some students but not all and many of those succeed in spite of the good intentions of professional educators. This is why we must not limit options for students.

"Although HB 2720's purpose seems innocuous as some would perceive it to just be a study; it is actually one more study to examine a system of virtual schools that have been studied over and over throughout the United States. In fact, the study purports to use the same data points that are readily available on the ODE website, which will undoubtedly include metrics such as graduation rates, state assessment results, and attendance data. I can not think of a bigger waste of taxpayer dollars, especially in a year when resources are scarce and legislators are scrambling to create an adequate educational budget...

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“Ultimately, if it is important to study virtual schools – why don’t we do a study on all of our high schools to determine why students are leaving traditional high schools and coming to charter schools? Why are there so many at-risk students? Do traditional brick and mortar schools add value to a student’s education? Do we know the answers to these questions?...”
[emphasis added]

In light of these well-stated concerns, HB 2720 A seems a costly distraction that could keep the legislature, ODE and all Oregonians from focusing on the real problems facing our public education system.

I urge you to oppose HB 2720 A.

Thank you,

Steve Buckstein
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