

To Members of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee  
April 1, 2013  
Testimony

My name is Kathleen Casasa and I am President of the Portland Education Association. I am speaking in favor of LD 1056 “An Act to Require Local Voter Approval for Charter Schools”. This bill is a step towards reinstating local control over our schools. Local schools and local school districts and local voters are left with the ramifications of the impact of charter schools. It seems only fair that they have a voice in the process of determining whether a charter school moves forward. For example, the recent situation in Portland is a prime example. Various leaders in Portland have expressed their concern about the Baxter Academy, especially in light of the serious allegations being shared regarding the operations of the school. The press reports have documented the problems clearly. Yet, despite the serious concerns being raised by leaders in Portland, the Charter School Commission continues to move forward. This bill would help make sure that local voices are heard in the process and will give the final authority to the voters – the ones who must pay for these schools anyway. If local dollars are going to follow students to charters, local voters should have a voice in determining whether a charter school is necessary and a good idea. Schools, Charter or private or public, do have an impact on the community in which they are located.

Submitted by:  
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