



June 15, 2021

Secretary Brocker,

Please accept this as my official vote explanation on the motion to withdraw Senate Bill 659 from the committee.

From 2011 to 2019, Oregon students could choose to attend any public school in the state. This enabled families to choose a school with programs and opportunities best fit for their student's needs and goals. This program sunset in 2019 and along with it, educational opportunity for the next generation of young Oregonians.

Under the current system, students are required to show "hardship" if they want to escape a school that isn't meeting their needs. What is not included in the legal definition of hardship are things like the students learning progress, needs, or even their own academic goals. This hardship standard is keeping countless kids from reaching their full potential in their education.

Unless you can clear this "hardship" hurdle, education is determined by where you live. ZIP code determines where you get educated. In some cases, it comes down to which side of the street you live on.

Let's use an example from right here in Salem. If you live on the west side of I-5, you will attend South Salem High School. 75% of their students are proficient in reading and writing and 40% are proficient in math. If you live on the east side of I-5, you are sent to McKay High School where only 59% are proficient in reading and writing and 28% in math. If a student from McKay is allowed to transfer to South Salem, they are 27% more likely to be proficient in math and 42% more likely to be proficient in reading.

So why do we tie where you live to where you go to school? After the Great Depression, in an attempt to help white American's refinance their homes, the federal government created color-coded maps in which red areas were considered the most hazardous. This is where redlining comes from. The Federal Housing Authority at the same time recommended that against putting children or "incompatible racial elements" in the same schools. It's not a surprise then that the school lines of today correspond closely with the redlined maps. A 2021 report from the Annenberg Institute at Brown University found that schools in previously redlined zones have much less diverse student populations and worse average test scores.

Our students' success should not be bound by what side of the street they live on or racist history in their neighborhood. The past year of school closures is causing many to realize who actually controls their education. It's not just in Oregon either. In April, Arizona joined other

states in advancing open-enrollment legislation, taking a major step toward erasing school boundary lines.

Senate Bill 659 would have been a step in the right direction toward erasing school boundary lines in Oregon. Parents would be free to enroll their children in any public school in the state they want, no matter where they live. I know teachers' unions and bureaucrats hate this idea. But that is where political courage is needed to stand up to powerful special interests. Unfortunately, this body didn't muster that courage today.

Respectfully submitted into the Senate Floor record,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Linthicum", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dennis Linthicum
Oregon State Senator
District 28