



March 16, 2011

To: Co-Chair Barnhart, Co-Chair Berger and members of the House Revenue Committee  
Fr: Tara O'Neil, Administrator, The Emerson School  
Re: HB 3397 – In favor

Good Morning Co-Chair Barnhart, Co-Chair Berger and members of the House Revenue Committee.

My name is Tara O'Neil, and I am the Administrator at The Emerson School, a small urban elementary charter school in downtown Portland. Thank you for considering my testimony today in support of HB 3397. I am in favor of this bill because it will be a big step toward funding equity for *all* public school students, and I urge you to support HB 3397 as well.

State school funding in Oregon is intended to "follow the student" to whatever public school the student attends. With the unforeseen growth of public charter schools in Oregon in the last 10 years, we have unintentionally created two classes of K-8 public school funding. There is District school funding, which includes 100% of the per-student state school funding; and Charter school funding, which is, as you have heard, substantially less. The remainder of the charter students' funding is retained by the districts with no restrictions on how it is used. House Bill 3397 makes great strides toward correcting that unintended public funding inequity by requiring districts to pass through 95% of ALL per-pupil funding, and requiring that the remaining 5% of the state funding that districts retain be used for charter school support.

Charter school students are not less deserving of their state funding than traditional students, nor should they be penalized financially for attending the public schools of their families' choice. Yet our current law inadvertently allows for exactly that. This funding belongs with the students, and while it has been retained by districts due to the unintended inequity in the law, it is not the district's money, it is the students'. It is incumbent on us to advocate for equitable funding for all public school students. HB 3397 doesn't require any new funding, and doesn't substantially change any aspect of charter law; it simply serves to help correct an unintentional state public school funding inequity.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony regarding this bill. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

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