



*Oregon Connections Academy Parent Association (ORCAPA) represents a group comprised of Connections Academy's online schooling families and friends.*

11 March 2013

Members of the Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee,

As the Oregon Connections Academy Parents Association (ORCAPA), we represent the roughly 3400 students and their families enrolled in Oregon Connections Academy (ORCA). We are opposed to SB508 as it is currently written.

Current law already requires a public charter school to enroll at least 25 full-time students or provide cooperative services for at least 25 students, and those provisions are essentially unchanged by this proposal. What the bill does add is a set of somewhat confusing new enrollment requirements only for charter schools that offer online courses. Provision (A) requires at least 250 part-time students from at least six different school districts. Provision (B) appears to be incomplete, but might be intended to require that at least one percent of the enrolled students be full-time.

The three subparagraphs (a, b, and c) of paragraph 5 are separate requirements with a school needing to comply with only one of them. Thus, a charter school such as ORCA would satisfy the first provision (at least 25 full-time students) and the others need not be fulfilled. What seems unclear is whether any charter school in the state would request a charter under the third provision and enroll at least 250 part-time students from at least six districts. Because funding cannot currently be shared between districts, this raises questions such as, "would the school qualify for zero state funding for their part-time students?"

When asked about this bill, one Senator stated that the intent was to open up online charter school enrollment to more students. Since the only proposed change to current law appears to be to allow a school to be created that must enroll hundreds of students for which they would receive no state funding, we do not see how the bill would in reality expand this option.

We look forward to the hearing on 12 March, and hope to hear some clarification of the intent by the long list of the bill's sponsors.

Sincerely,

ORCAPA Board Members:

*Anne Marie Gurney, Jessica Cousineau, Preston Baxter, Mark Scarborough,  
Paula Foster, Lori Conklin*