



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

17 March 2013

Members of the House Revenue Committee,

As the Oregon Connections Academy Parents Association (ORCAPA), we represent the roughly 3400 students, and families, enrolled in Oregon Connections Academy (ORCA). We are opposed to HB 2457, which would impose an as yet unspecified funding decrease targeted at online public charter schools.

In the 2010 REPORT TO THE 75TH LEGISLATURE, Online Learning<sup>1</sup>, authored by the Oregon State Board of Education, an entire section was devoted to "Appropriate Levels of Funding." While some costs are lower for online schools (physical infrastructure, transportation, etc), other costs are much higher (technology development, provided equipment, shipping, etc). Preliminary findings by the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators' (COSA) Funding Coalition estimated that the cost per student attending an online school is about 70 percent of what is spent by school districts for students in traditional schools (page 18).

Although the Funding Coalition cited inadequate data to recommend this 70% level, we will stipulate that it is an appropriate level, solely for the purpose of this letter. The total state operating cost for the latest available year (2009) was \$5.16 billion, and the state student count was 557,000<sup>2</sup>. Dividing the total cost by the number of students results in an average actual cost of \$9250 per student. Based on those estimates, the "appropriate level of funding" would be  $0.70 \times \$9250 = \$6475$  per student. The ADMw for school year 2009-2010 was only \$5837<sup>3</sup>. Online public charter schools do not receive the state or federal grant monies available to traditional schools and instead rely solely on ADMw funding. Therefore, online education students in Oregon are already under-funded compared to the appropriate amount given by COSA.

HB 2457 would impose further reduction in the funding for this small yet successful segment of Oregon's students. Standardized testing scores by ORCA students typically meet or exceed average scores by their statewide counterparts. Families report their overall satisfaction levels at more than 95% positive. Online education is gaining acceptance by many areas of our society, including Oregon's statewide education establishment who are proposing special legislation to allow them to create their own charter school which could be administered through the Oregon Virtual School District (SB 508<sup>4</sup>).

Join with the families, legislators and the governor who have championed this education paradigm choice. Even supporters of traditional education models are embracing this technology. We urge you to support students by voting against this bill, which would decrease an already inappropriately low level of funding.

Sincerely,

ORCAPA Board Members:

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

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ode.state.or.us/superintendent/priorities/2010-online-learning-report-to-the-legislature-final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.oregon.gov/Education/Education-Actual-Operating-Cost-Per-Student/c7av-ntdz>

<sup>3</sup> <http://schoolfinancesdav.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/oregon2011.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.leg.state.or.us/13reg/measpdf/sb0500.dir/sb0508.intro.pdf>