



Senate Meeting Testimony

NAME: Caroline Li

AGENDA: Support for SB 819

Chair Roblan, and members of the committee, I'm Caroline Li, a co-founder of Hope Chinese Charter School in the Beaverton School District. HCCS is the first and only Chinese immersion public school on Portland's west side. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I'm the mother of two little girls. I'm also an international marketing professional whose work included managing a marketing team in Asia for Intel Corporation.

I support bill SB 819, which would raise charter school funding to more equitable levels. High quality educational programs are mandatory to keep Oregon competitive and economically strong. Charter schools are typically started because there's a significant gap that district-run schools cannot meet.

In my case, it was Chinese immersion. Mandarin Chinese is identified as a critical language by the federal government and China's economy is expected to outpace ours in about 10 short years. China is Oregon's largest trading partner, and Chinese is the most widely spoken native language in the world. Plus its tonal nuances are hard to hear, so you have to start when children are young enough to learn it. If we want Oregonians to lead, then we've got to provide the skills to do it.

Our wise founders also developed a positive behavior program that teaches Global Citizen skills like empathy, critical thinking, and peaceful conflict resolution. These are critical life skills that lay the foundation for preventing violence at school, for succeeding at work, and for solving big world problems.

But we need your help. Federal and state grants that we thought we could get dried up due to government budget cuts when HCCS launched 3 years ago. A recent study also shows that in the 2012 school year, students in Oregon charter schools received 42% less public funding than students in district-run schools. That's a huge gap and it's obviously impacting our school. SB 819 would remedy the disparity without requiring any new revenue. It would simply enable *public* funds to follow *public school students*. It would shift less than 1% of the state K-12 budget.

HCCS brings in revenue to the Beaverton school district because we attract many private school families, and we also have a waiting list.

I'm just a regular mom who never dreamed that I'd give up 2 years of paid work to start a school. But the need is urgent and important. HCCS is a success, but we'll quickly lose ground without funding. To serve the *public* we need equitable *public funds* because we can't charge tuition. With your help, we can do this. Together, we can solve district educational gaps and provide needed programs by supporting SB 819. Thank you.

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