

Subject: Support for SB 819 and SB 820

Chair Roblan & Committee,

Tomorrow SB 819 and SB 820 will be before the Senate Committee on Education and I urge you to please pass these two critical measures. Public charter schools are a vital source of energy and experimentation in public education. While public school does a fantastic job of educating most students in a cost effective manner, there are some children who this system doesn't work for – with an array of different reasons.

Southwest Charter School in South Portland, for which I am a board member, receives many of these students who didn't make it in traditional public school. Almost all of them begin to thrive in our carefully crafted community and go on to do very well in the public high school system. While our teachers and place based educational system surely has much to do with this, there is certainly a component of their success that is due to a smaller and different environment; one in which many various types of charter schools can provide.

Unfortunately our school, like many other charter schools, must make all this happen with 42% less funding than district schools get. The Chalkboard Project just did a thorough study of this and the results are discouraging. As the Treasurer of our board, I know firsthand how difficult it is to achieve the results we have, and are being held to, with such a drastic reduction in funding.

Our teachers and children deserve the same funding and opportunities that are provided to all teachers and children, even if that means migrating to an alternative charter environment which allows them to thrive. I ask that you please pass SB 819 and SB 820 tomorrow.

I very much appreciate your careful consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,

Dennis Allen
Treasurer, Board of Directors, Southwest Charter School
Portland, OR