

**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 emphatically urge you to pass these two critical measures. Public charter schools are a vital source of energy and experimentation in public education. While traditional public school environments may adequately educate most students in a cost effective manner, there are children, like mine, for whom this system does not work

My daughter transferred to Southwest Charter School in Portland's South Waterfront neighborhood 3 years ago when she was more than midway through her 4th grade year at a PPS magnet school. My daughter has a diagnosis of ADHD; she has a high IQ and poor executive function. She spent 4 1/2 years in a traditional public school environment, being marginalized by her teachers and peers because she was not able to succeed behind a desk six hours per day. My daughter's confidence plummeted, her attitude toward school became bitter and combative and depression enveloped her. Knowing that her learning and emotional needs were not allowed to be met in a traditional school environment, we transferred her to Southwest Charter School (SWCS). The small class sizes, access to teachers and administrators and place based learning focus turned what we knew of public education on its ear. My daughter was finally allowed to learn in a way that her brain accepted and she immediately began to THRIVE. She was allowed to learn in a hands-on way, spending time beyond classroom walls, in the community in which she lives. She was asked to EXPERIENCE what she was learning and was encouraged to contribute. My daughter was asked to share her knowledge and expertise with her peers. She was validated - and she became a successful student.

3 years later, now that she's a seventh grader, I see that my daughter's story is not a unique one at SWCS. She learns in the company of many students who were failed by a traditional public school system. Almost all of her peers begin to thrive in our uniquely crafted and encouraging community and go on to do very well in both a traditional and non-traditional public high school setting. While our teachers and place based educational focus 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 a tireless SWCS volunteer and co-chair of our largest annual fundraising event, 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 compared to our district counterparts.

Our teachers and children deserve the same funding and opportunities that are provided to all district 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,

Juli Kirby  
Southwest Charter School Parent, Volunteer & Friends of SW Charter School Board  
Member  
Portland, OR