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Subject: Charter School Funding bills- 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 spouse and I researched school options for two years before applying and getting into Southwest Charter School in Portland's South Waterfront neighborhood for kindergarten last year. My son has a diagnosis of ADHD; he has a very high IQ and poor executive function. He had struggled with boredom and impulse control during his years at preschool, and we feared that he would be marginalized by his teachers and peers in a traditional public school environment, because he would not be able to succeed behind a desk six hours per day. We feared that his self-esteem would plummet and his natural passion for learning would be lost. We attended our neighborhood school's open house and inquired specifically on how they would deal with a child like my son. Since it was clear that his learning and emotional needs would not be met in this traditional school environment, we decided it was important that we choose Southwest Charter School (SWCS). The small class sizes and access to teachers and administrators has been a huge part of what has allowed my son to thrive. He has been able to work closely with his teachers and the school staff, and has learned to regulate his behavior, with his self-esteem not only remaining intact, but improved. He is able to learn in a hands-on way, and also to follow his own interests at times. He is excited to go to school now, and is an appreciated member of the school community. My son's story is not a unique one at SWCS. He learns in the company of many students who were failed by a traditional public school system. Almost all of his 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 SWCS volunteer 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. Also, I often feel sad for our remarkably dedicated teachers, who bear the brunt of the financial shortfall. They work long and hard hours for much less pay than other PPS teachers. I recently learned that our longest-serving teacher who's worked with us for 8 years and is universally beloved, now makes what the typical PPS teacher makes in her 1st year of teaching. We lose good teachers because of this, and I worry for the teachers and for

our school's sustainability. Also, we have no money for art or music this year. The students and parents had to work hard to raise extra funds to meet what should be considered basics for all school-aged children. 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, Dr. Ann Holland Southwest
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