

Subject: SB 819 and SB 820

Dear members of the committee,

I am a parent, an educator, the wife and daughter of public school educators. I am a believer in public education, and I believe public education exists to provide opportunity for all to better themselves and be contributing members of a democratic society. I never considered charter schools until the needs of my elder son were not being met in the environment of PPS. I was happy to know that charter schools are public schools which were put into existence to provide opportunity to develop better models of education not only for the select few who had the means to make a choice for an alternative to the status quo, but to be labs of innovation from which all schools and educators could learn. Why create a system for innovation and then impede its ability to innovate and succeed and serve the diversity of learners in our society today by not providing it with the funding it needs?

So many of today's public schools find themselves fighting for every dollar to sustain the status quo, which in all honesty, is not good. This is the political environment charter schools find themselves in. It is incumbent upon legislatures to take the lead in not heeding this call for the sake of the mighty voice of PPS and other large districts at the detriment of the opportunity to support innovation through support of charter schools.

Allow funding options to be open to charter schools so that they can succeed. And support SB 820 in order to allow diverse populations, often of lower socio-economic means, to participate in these incubators of educational innovation by allowing for enrollment options. These two measures together embody the progressive culture that is Oregon.

I won't go into the specifics of the charter school where my sons have and do attend and for which I am a board member because I am a proponent of all public education, quality public education, and to make a system the best it can be, it has to allow for opportunities to learn, grow, and innovate. That is why Oregon chose to allow charter schools, and that is why they deserve to be supported. It is about the children, and not just the children in my charter school or all charter schools; it is about all children who deserve to live in a society that does everything possible to make a better system, especially when that system is in need of improvement. Charter schools allow us to see how things can be different, and they deserve the financial support needed to do so.

Respectfully (and quite honestly, exhaustedly :)),
Laura Shier
Southwest Charter School Board Member
PTA member of Wilson High School