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Chair Roblan, members of the committee, I am David Cross, and I am a member of the board at Springwater School in Oregon City, Oregon. I am a father of six children, and my two youngest children attend Springwater School in grades 1 and 3. Although my eldest children have now left school, I have experienced first-hand the public, public charter, and private education systems in England, Sweden, and now the USA.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I am originally from a small, working class town in Northern England, where I attended a public school. I left school at 16 without attending high school, and I have received no formal higher education.

Since then I have run my own successful business for the last 28 years. I have worked in 23 countries, including voluntary earthquake relief work, and I have lived in 6 countries. I finally settled in Oregon, and have called it home now for over 13 years.

Over the years, and throughout my work and my travels around the world, I have come to believe that every child is born with the same opportunities in life. However, those equal opportunities may present themselves more easily to children who are ***provided*** more equal access to those opportunities in the first place.

To misquote another Englishman, George Orwell; all opportunities are created equal, but *some opportunities* are created more equal than others.

In spite of what could never be described as a privileged upbringing, I have done quite well for myself, and I consider myself deeply fortunate for the life I now enjoy.

Until I heard and researched more about the term recently, I did not even know that - growing up - I was an "undeserved student" but we received free school meals and wore second-hand clothes. I am fortunate for the opportunities given to me in my life.

There are some good research on creating success for undeserved students in higher education including a study from the University of Iowa, published in 2006 [*Reconceptualizing Success for Underserved Students in Higher Education; Laura I. Rendón, Iowa State University*]. It all starts by giving these students an equal playing field at the start of their education.

Bills SB819 and SB820 now before the Committee, are about just that:

1. Firstly, by providing more equal opportunities and a more level playing field to children from backgrounds who may not otherwise enjoy certain family, class, or societal privileges, and that would otherwise skew the playing field to their disadvantage, and;
2. Secondly, about making sure that public charter schools themselves are able to operate on a level playing field with equal opportunities compared to their traditional public school counterparts. The current funding disparity does not allow for this and in my view, fosters inequality.

I fully support both of these bills - both as a parent and as a charter school board member - but mainly because I have experienced personally how an equal opportunity provided in the right way early in life can foster individual growth, and contribute to a better, more equitable society.

Both bills are - in their spirit and their letter - eminently practical ways to create greater equality, and through means that that are fair, just and equitable.

I implore you to do the right thing, and to vote in favor of both bills.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

David Cross
Estacada, OR, April 8, 2015