



Thank you, Senator Roblan, Representative Komp, Senator Kruse, and Representative Huffman, for sponsoring SB 819 and to you all, as well as to Senator Hass, for sponsoring SB 820.

SB 819: SB 819 would legally ensure that our children in “regular” (nonprofit, community-based, brick-and-mortar) public charter schools have a more equitable funding model. It would require that a sponsoring school district pass through 95% of state, local and federal public funds (EXCLUDING special education and facilities funding) that districts have on behalf of all children in their LEA (providing each sponsoring district with 5% for charter school oversight).

- According to the 2015 Study conducted by EcoNorthwest,* as commissioned by the Chalkboard Project, which analyzed ODE data on ALL public funds that districts receive on behalf of public school children: **Oregon public charter schools in 2012-13 received 42% less public funding on a per student basis than their district-run counterparts, an average of \$5,000 less per student!**
- SB 819 would partially remedy this disparity without requiring any “new revenue.” It would simply require that the funds follow the students to public charter schools. This would “shift” **less than 1% of the state K-12 budget**, and would make a world difference to our children in public charter schools (particularly by enabling charter schools to hire/retain top-notch educators and provide a physical facility that maximizes quality teaching and learning).
- Perhaps in 1999 when ORS Chapter 338 became law, the notion was for charter schools to be exempt from many statutes. However, the following year, NCLB passed, and much of that flexibility circled the drain before our first charter school even opened its doors. **Since 1999, the list of laws (ORS 338.115(1)) from which charters are not and cannot be exempt, has increased from 15 to 26 sets of statutes (many of them enormous regulations), and many additional regulations and requirements have been added through the chartering/contracting process over the past 15 years.** The autonomies that charter schools have are essentially over hiring and school calendar/schedule, more control over the means to get to the same ends as all other public charter schools. Common Core, State Assessments, teacher qualifications, etc., loom as large in public charter schools as in district-run schools.
- Whatever “political compromises” the 1999 Legislature made, whatever the messages or conversations were then, about having different funding levels for different grades or the like, 15 years later, much has changed and been realized as Oregon has implemented ORS Chapter 338, and none of us are beholden to that past.
- **Charter schools have no “central office services”** like district-run schools do, and have no legal assurance of access to them through their sponsoring districts in exchange for the “administrative oversight funds” districts retain. We provide all of our own Human Resources, Finance, Operations, Board/Policy/Governance and all other services. As 501(c)(3) organizations, we have quarterly and annual IRS reporting requirements that districts do not have. Further, we pay for our facility costs (lease/mortgage, utilities, etc.) out of our reduced operational funds, while district-run facilities are financially supported through bonds. All charter schools have the same high PERS rate – 20.22%. These realities are reason enough for charter schools to receive the same level of funding for all students, regardless of grade level.

*Complete study is at: http://chalkboardproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Charter-Funding-Study_Mar2015.pdf

- **A typical administrative rate in the public education arena (for grants, contracts, services, etc.) is 5% or 10%.** Anywhere in the vicinity of 42% (for a district sponsoring a charter school) is rare and, frankly, indefensible in this instance. ORS Chapter 338 requires a sponsoring district to conduct one site visit annually, and review an annual report and annual municipal audit. Any other services a district may provide are optional. Certainly a charter school could contract back with its sponsoring district for specific services, as happens in many other states. **SB 819 would still leave a sponsoring district with an administrative rate above 10%** (since special education funding and facility funding would not be impacted by this legislation).
- As we all know, school funding is convoluted, difficult to comprehend. Yet. How can we ignore **three** studies (2010 and 2015, state-level; 2014, national-level) that all conclude through analysis of ODE school finance data that Oregon children in public charter schools are short-changed by approximately HALF? Certainly these studies have merit.
- We are all painfully aware that K-12 resources in Oregon are inadequate. We fall far below the Quality Education Model funding level recommended by the Oregon Quality Education Commission. **However inadequate, the system provides an equitable “base level” of funding for all public school children (with “extra weight” for children we know cost more to educate). Except for children in public charter schools - they are the only Oregon public school children below the “funding base” to which we consistently voice support.** We have demonstrated our commitment to equalizing state K-12 funding, on a per-pupil basis, regardless of the performance of a public school...so how does the system defend short-changing a tiny percentage of our children, creating a group of second-class citizens? Adult politics?
- How can we continue to ignore the disparity that our children in public charter schools experience?
- **SB 819 would not provide true funding parity. It would move us closer.** It would not change anything related to special education funding; the sponsoring district would still retain that “double weight” and retain the responsibility for IDEA. It would not provide children in public charter schools access to facilities their parents taxes help support. It **WOULD** provide them with 95% of the State School Fund and other state funds (e.g., School Improvement Fund, should it be reactivated), local option funds, and federal funds, as well as access to state transportation funds.
- This bill is about equity; students in public charter schools are as valuable and as worthy of our public investment as students in district-run schools.

SB 820: Would allow public charter schools to use “weighted lotteries” for historically underserved students (as defined by race, culture, poverty, or language).

- A “weighted lottery” essentially means putting a student’s name “in the hat” two or three times instead of just once.
- This would increase the odds of historically underserved students gaining admission to public charter schools.
- Many other states use “weighted lottery” for admission to public charter school students (for historically underserved students, based on geography, or to ensure reflection of the local district’s demographics).
- KairosPDX requested this legislation, as it essential to our continuing to serve the students for whom we designed our public charter school. Many other charter schools support this legislation, as well; combined with a more equitable funding model and strategic outreach, we should see increasing diversity in charter school student demographics.

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