

TO: Chairman Roblan & Members of the Senate Education Committee  
FROM: Sue Hass, parent, Opal School of the Children's Museum  
RE: Senate Bill 915

Hello.

My name is Sue Haas and I have two sons at the Opal Charter School. My oldest son has autism. When we started looking at elementary schools, we didn't have a formal diagnosis for my son, but we knew he struggled with basic social interactions. We worked hard to foster connections between him and other children through community activities, but without a consistent set of peers, his progress was limited.

When we discovered Opal Charter School's social emotional curriculum with its focus on healthy conflict resolution, we thought it might be a stretch for him, but ultimately decided it seemed like a great opportunity for him to become part of a supportive community where he could work on developing social skills.

Over the years, I have seen his ability to connect with others increase in ways I never imagined. I hear from other parents how their child benefits from experiences they have as a result of my son's full inclusion in the charter school classroom. I see my younger son use Opal strategies to make deep connections with his brother that far surpass my expectation of how any siblings would interact, let alone a pair including one child with autism.

My hope is that we can afford these sorts of opportunities to families who can't currently access a charter school, so that more families who can't provide their own transportation to a charter school, or who require before and after care services, or whose children depend on free and reduced lunches as part of their child's school day can access a charter school with a mission that speaks to them the way Opal Charter School's mission spoke to my family.

Thank you very much for your time.