

PAUL L. EVANS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 20



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 12, 2017

Representative Margaret Doherty
Chairman, House Committee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

Ref: House Bill 3409 – 1 Amendment

Chair Doherty, Members of the Committee:

House Bill 3409 with the – 1 Amendment is what some might call a “technical fix” to a problem unique to organizations working with foreign students. This bill is very simple: it seeks to ensure truancy laws exempt private schools providing learning opportunities (often associated with follow-on attendance at US colleges and/or universities) to foreign students. At present, foreign students who possess high school completion equivalency but are under eighteen (18) years of age may be found in violation of certain/specific laws associated with “truancy.”

Today in Oregon there are several private organizations that provide a critical bridge for foreign students seeking entry and success at our colleges and/or universities. For decades, these programs have facilitated the learning for foreign students into and out of our state without a problem. We have a program in Monmouth that has fostered a true partnership with students from countries and regions around the world. This partnership is more than the sum of its parts; it is a valuable relationship I hope we can continue for many years to come.

Unfortunately, the federal government has recently changed interpretations of policy related to non-immigrant student visa programming. Truth be told, there appears to be little rationale offered for these changes, but the impacts are real nonetheless. The consequences have resulted in an unanticipated, unintended, and unwanted expectation that foreign students are subject to attendance laws written for Oregon students in Oregon schools. It is a bizarre situation that defies explanation. And yet, it is an emergent barrier for these private entities and the students/parents they serve.

After trying an administrative and/or policy solution it became apparent that a statutory “fix” was the only viable option to ensure foreign students continue to receive the learning opportunities they have enjoyed (and we hope shall continue to enjoy) for years. These students comprise a large portion of our foreign student populations at our colleges and universities; they provide a meaningful perspective for all involved in a campus community – they are customers and friends – that return home after a special learning experience to share what they have learned about their studies as well as our nation, state, and communities.

I believe this bill is a small price to pay for securing the benefits associated with these private learning environments. I truly appreciate your willingness for me to share this issue with you and ask for your support of this measure. If you have questions or require additional information about this matter or others, please let me know.

Respectfully,

Paul L. Evans
State Representative