



To: Members of the House Education Committee

From: Iris Maria Chávez, Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools

Date: January 25, 2023

Re: House Bill 2257 – [funding for constructing school infrastructure](#)

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Hudson and Wright, and members of the Committee:

I write to you on behalf of the Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools, our state's charter support organization and are a coalition of community-based, public charter schools representing all corners of our state. We represent approximately 26,000 public school students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade, operating in about 100 buildings.

I say buildings, specifically, instead of "school buildings" because many (if not a majority) of public charter schools operate out of non-traditional buildings. Think retail strip mall spaces, rented church spaces, modular units, former health care clinics, etc.

Now more than ever, we have seen how Oregon families and students have varying needs and wants when it comes to their education. Our schools, as public charter schools, have been developed to meet these varying needs and our educational models are founded on the principle of meeting our students where they are.

However, too many of our public charter school students are in buildings that are ill suited for providing educational services and of subpar safety and quality. Charter school operators don't often have the ability to manage safety upgrades for the buildings in which they are housed as they don't have ownership or **any access to state facilities funds**. Oregon's public charter schools fund their rental of "school building" space out of their State School Fund dollars *and* often don't have access to empty school buildings from the school districts in which they are authorized/sponsored (some too, but too few).

As you consider the important facilities needs of our public schools we implore you to recognize that public charter schools are educating tens of thousands of students in, often subpar, facilities. We urge you to ensure public charter schools have access to these facilities grants as you move this conversation forward.

Iris Maria Chávez

Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools (ORC3S)