

House Committee On Education
Oregon State Senate
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the Committee:

As a first grade teacher at Sherwood Charter School I urge you to support House Bill 3444. Oregon's public charter schools serve a critical role in Oregon's education system. Many of the students we serve were unable to be effectively educated, for a variety of reasons, in district schools. Public charter schools are committed to educational innovation, providing personalized educational opportunities for our students, and emphasizing equity and autonomy to ultimately transform the lives of young people.

Unfortunately, Oregon law shortchanges public charter school students. By passing HB 3444, we can fix the outdated issues with Oregon's school funding model and provide fair funding for public charter school students.

Oregon's public charter schools can only access 80% of State School Grant funds, and have no access to the number of other revenue streams that districts receive. This dynamic has created a huge disparity in funding. A recent report by ECONorthwest¹ found that Oregon public charter schools receive less than half the funding of their district counterparts. Over the last ten years, charter school enrollment has gone up, but funding relative to enrollment has decreased. Without access to an equitable share of the SSF Grant and other streams of revenue that feed into the District-run schools, this gap will only continue to grow.

At my school, this funding gap is evident as we have to weigh where each dollar goes in our tight budget. For example, we have to prioritize putting new roofs on

¹ ECONorthwest. *Study of Oregon Charter School Funding 2024*. Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools, Oct. 2024. https://www.orc3s.org/files/ugd/62bea0_05eae6c4155f4e29bf6063fabb2547be.pdf

our buildings this year, which is causing cuts in other areas. We are having to make decisions on what will be prioritized between things such as buying a playground, staff salaries, field trips, curriculum costs, updating old and broken technology, hiring support staff, and more. We rely heavily on fundraising to support our school, and we often do not meet fundraising goals. We have learned to do more with less, but this is not sustainable. Having access to a more fair allocation of State School Funds would greatly benefit our school.

Passing HB 3444 will help fix this ongoing disparity by:

- Allowing charter school students to access 95% of the ADMw provided through the State School Fund.
- Allowing charter school students to access local, state and federal education dollars that are also currently available to non charter public schools.
- Allowing charter schools to provide transportation services to students living within their sponsoring district and access transportation reimbursement grant dollars for providing those services.

All students in Oregon's public education system should have access to fairly funded public education options that meet their needs. On behalf of our teachers, staff, and most importantly students, please support HB 3444.

Thank you,

Samantha Coats

1st Grade Teacher

Sherwood Charter School