

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 parent of an Oregon public charter school student, I am writing today in support of House Bill 3444. HB 3444 will fix a deep disparity currently happening in Oregon schools: that Oregon public charter school students are essentially funded at 48 cents on the dollar compared to district students. Public charter school students are public school students, and it's past time to fund their education fairly.

Almost every public charter school parent has a story as to why a public charter school became the right fit for their child and their family. Many families are put in the awful position of having to choose between the educational services and experience their child needs that only a public charter school provides, at the expense of other services that the state funds at traditional public schools, like transportation support, food security programs and more.

Essentially, the disparity of funding between public charter vs. public schools is an issue of equity. For example, when ALL public-school students within Oregon public school districts are able to receive free lunch this school year, my child along with her charter peers are denied such access by the district because of their public charter status. When resources are only provided less than half of what's needed, teachers, students and parents unavoidably need to find additional time to solve the funding issue, while this time could have been dedicated to instruction, multi-tiered student intervention, and much more. We, the parents, fulfill our tax duties. Our property tax dollars go into supporting public education. Why then, are we not granted equal access (charter students only receiving 48% of what public school peers are given) to this public funding? Parents and charter school staff alone should not be the ones to address this issue of equity but policy makers and school districts. Change needs to happen top down to show leaders actually believe in what they preach. If Oregon leaders believe in fairness, equity and education, this disparity between public schools and public charter needs to be addressed.

As a parent, I have seen firsthand the positive impact that charter schools have on students. My child has benefited greatly from the specialized curriculum, dedicated educators, and unique learning environment that their charter school provides. My student's academic performance is stellar thanks to the curriculum and dedication of teachers, parental involvement is significant, and educators are incredibly dedicated. However, none of these successes are sustainable without equitable funding compared to neighborhood public schools. Without fair financial support, charter schools will struggle to maintain the high standards and exceptional learning experiences that benefit so many students.

Early success and solid foundations within public charter elementary schools also mean less support (e.g. less likely to be on 504 or IEP, less likely to require mental support, etc.) needed down the road for middle school and high school pipelines. Investing in public charter to encourage success and excellence will also help save resources along this K-12 journey.

Unfortunately, because of Oregon's current school funding model, public charter schools are significantly underfunded. Many buildings are old and in need of upgrades or are not designed to promote learning as they are repurposed buildings; students can't access transportation services; food security programs are limited; and schools lack essential school supplies and mental health resources. By supporting HB 3444, you are standing up for the rights of all public-school students—regardless of the type of school they attend. I respectfully ask you to vote in favor of this bill and work to ensure that charter school students are treated fairly under Oregon's education system. You can fix this ongoing disparity and provide fair funding for public charter school students who deeply need it.

Please vote yes on HB 3444.

Thank you,

Isabell Zhu

(Parent of a kindergartener who currently attends a Beaverton School District charter)