

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 Superintendent-Principal at Eagle 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 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 By passing HB 3444, we can fix the outdated issues with Oregon's school funding model and provide fair funding for public charter school students.

Most of 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 increased, 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 most evident in our staff salaries compared to staff employed in our local school district. Our charter school employees make,

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

on average, \$10,000 a year less than their colleagues in the neighborhood schools. This makes recruiting highly qualified staff even more challenging; we cannot compete with larger schools that can offer more money. Additionally, we work very hard to have excellent attendance, but we cannot offer our families school transportation and we do not have access to transportation grants. This lack of school-provided transportation creates inequities for our families and causes barriers for lower-income families who would like to access charter school education.

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,

Marie C. Ballance, Ed.D., C.A.S.
Superintendent-Principal
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