

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Shanon Melling, and I am a parent of two students at Sauvie Island School, a public charter school in the Scappoose School District. My 11-year-old is in 5th grade, and my 9-year-old is in 4th.

We chose Sauvie Island School for its strong community and commitment to critical thinking and experiential learning. Several of my nieces and nephews attended, and I was amazed by the level of thinking they developed at an early age—something I didn't experience until AP English in high school.

But more than that, I saw firsthand how Sauvie supports students with learning differences. When my children enrolled, we quickly discovered they both had dyslexia. Their challenges looked different, so we didn't realize my son had been passing through school with undiagnosed dyslexia until it started affecting his mental health.

Sauvie Island School changed everything for us.

- Their reading curriculum is based on the science of reading.
- Their math curriculum is hands-on and experiential—which is critical for students with dyslexia and ADHD.
- The school provides a neurodivergent-friendly culture—fidgets and wobble chairs are allowed, and students receive weekly class counseling on building a growth mindset, friendships and social skills.

And the results speak for themselves:

- 64% of Sauvie Island students meet Language Arts standards (vs. 43% state average).
- 58% meet Math standards (vs. 33% state average).
- 50% meet Science standards (vs. 29% state average).

We are outperforming state averages, yet our funding is a fraction of what district-run schools receive.

Let me be clear: We are not asking for a handout—we are asking for fairness.

If we had equitable funding:

- Parents wouldn't have to spend nights and weekends fundraising just to cover basic needs.
- Our children wouldn't have to share the janitor's workshop for art and music.
- PE wouldn't be outside in the rain because we don't have enough covered space.
- We could replace frayed carpets, cracked paint, and whiteboards that are over 20 years old without fundraising for it ourselves.
- We wouldn't be constantly scrambling to keep our teachers because we simply cannot pay them competitively.

I have personally spent countless hours fundraising for things that district-run schools take for granted—from functional whiteboards to our music teacher's paternity leave.

So, when I learned that charter schools receive only 48% of the funding that district schools get, I wasn't surprised—but I was outraged.

This funding gap is a betrayal—to my children, to our families, and to a school that is proving that what we do works.

Our students deserve better.

I urge you to fix this inequity and support House Bill 3444.