

Submitter: Christa Billings
On Behalf Of: Arco Iris Spanish Immersion Charter School
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3444

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 board member at Arco Iris Spanish Immersion 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 By passing HB 3444, we can fix the outdated issues with Oregon's school funding model and provide fair funding for public charter school students.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 ECONorthwest 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 in teacher turnover due to lower wages. Increased funding would allow Arco Iris to offer competitive wages and professional development to maintain high-quality instruction.

Our facilities lack the needs of our school. We face higher operational costs – we pay for services that traditional districts provide centrally, such as food service, transportation, and administrative support, further straining our budget,

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,

Christa Billings

Arco Iris School Board Vice Chair