

Submitter: Alexandra Gilbertson
On Behalf Of:
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 parents of a student attending an Oregon public charter school, we are writing to express our strong support for House Bill 3444. This important bill addresses a significant inequity in Oregon's education system: currently, students in public charter schools receive only about 48 cents on the dollar compared to their district counterparts. Charter school students are public school students, and it is long overdue that they are funded equitably.

As a first-time parent at Springwater Environmental Sciences School, my son began the 2023-2024 school year as a kindergartner with special needs and an open IEP. He is not the only student in his class requiring special care; several of his classmates also have special needs. However, Springwater has only one instructional aid for the entire school. While our now first grade class requires additional one-on-one support, the resources available are extremely limited. Increasing per-student funding from 80% to 95% would enable the school to hire more instructional aids, ensuring that all students receive the necessary support to succeed.

Unfortunately, due to Oregon's current funding model, public charter schools are facing severe underfunding. Many charter school buildings are outdated and in urgent need of repairs, students lack access to transportation services, food security programs are scarce, and there is a shortage of essential supplies and mental health resources. Passing HB 3444 would address these disparities and ensure fair funding for the students who need it most.

We greatly appreciate the unique opportunities that charter schools provide to our community. We urge the committee to support the individualized learning needs of all students in Oregon City and vote in favor of HB 3444.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Alexandra and Jake Gilbertson
(parents of a Springwater first grader and soon-to-be Springwater kindergartener)