

## **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 the Executive Director of Sauvie Island School, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in support of HB 3444.

On April 7, 2015, I testified at the Capitol on SB 819, sponsored by Senator Roblan, which aimed to increase state funding for public charter schools. At that time, I hoped the testimony from charter school leaders, teachers, and families would address the funding inequities that had persisted since Oregon's first public charter school opened in 1999.

Senator Roblan's bill did not pass. Instead, a workgroup was convened to discuss charter school funding, though no meaningful changes were made.

It's 10 years later, and the inequities in public charter school funding still exist.

The ORS tasks public charter schools to "increase student learning and achievement; Better meet individual student academic needs and interests; Build stronger working relationships among educators, parents, and other community members; and Encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods" among other things.

We are working so hard to hold up our end of the bargain. Many of the students we serve struggled to get the education they needed in their traditional neighborhood schools, for various reasons. We plan community events, pour over student test scores, seek out stronger curricula, attend training and professional development, research best practices, create engaging lessons and units and experiences.

And yet, you refuse to fund us equitably.

Oregon's public charter schools only get 80% of the State School Grant funds, and we don't have access to many of the other revenue streams that district schools do. This has created a big funding gap, and it's getting wider. A recent ECONorthwest report found that charter schools in Oregon receive less than half the funding that district schools get.

At my school, this funding gap is evident in how much time we are forced to spend "getting creative" in order to fund basic necessities, such as retaining quality staff, installing automatic door locks for safety, and replacing 30-year-old carpet. We chase down grants, we hold fundraisers, we ask our families to consider monthly giving, and even still, we can barely balance our budget, to say nothing of setting aside money for a rainy day.

To put it simply: the time spent trying to find funding could be better used for educating kids.

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,



Sincerely,  
Darla Meeuwsen  
Executive Director, Sauvie Island School