

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:

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 3444 as both a parent of a student at Coburg Community Charter School (CCCS) and as a Board member and Treasurer of this institution.

The current funding disparity between charter schools and traditional public schools in Oregon creates an inherently inequitable educational landscape. Charter school students currently receive only 48 cents on the dollar compared to their district peers. This severe underfunding forces our Executive Director and Board to make painful sacrifices that no other public schools in our district face.

Families choose charter schools for deeply personal reasons—whether due to previous experiences, educational philosophy, specialized programs, or the school's reputation. This educational choice fundamentally shapes a child's development for up to nine years of their academic journey. Making this educational choice should not result in our children receiving fewer resources than their peers who attend traditional public schools just blocks away.

My personal connection to this issue began when my daughter enrolled as a Kindergartener at CCCS in September 2020. Despite the pandemic's challenges, our community persevered. To become more involved, I joined the Board of Directors in 2022, which revealed the extraordinary dedication of our educators and the precarious financial reality facing our school.

The funding shortfall has forced difficult decisions that impact our educational environment:

- Last year, facing an unsustainable budget deficit, we were forced to make painful adjustments to salary schedules, step increases, and cost-of-living adjustments for our dedicated staff
- Despite their commitment to our school's values and community, we have lost exceptional educators who simply cannot afford to earn substantially less than colleagues at neighboring schools
- Basic services like landscaping now rely on volunteer efforts from our community and even our Executive Director, who can often be seen mowing the grounds evenings and weekends

While our teachers understand the sacrifices inherent in working at a charter school, compensation disparities should never force dedicated educators to choose between their preferred teaching environment and financial stability. Our students deserve access to the best teachers, regardless of which public school they attend.

House Bill 3444 represents a critical step toward educational equity for all Oregon students. By addressing the funding gap, this legislation would allow charter schools to focus on educational innovation rather than financial survival. I urge you to support this bill and ensure that all public school students—regardless of which public school they attend—receive equitable resources for their education.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Jacen Miller
Board Member and Treasurer
Coburg Community Charter School