



91274 North Coburg Road, Coburg, OR 97408

Phone: 541-344-4113 www.coburgcharter.org

Executive Director: Dave Wallace - director@coburgcharter.org

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Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the Committee,

Let me first say thank you for taking the time yesterday to listen to me and others speak to you all regarding HB 3444. There were many voices coming out in support of charter school and the facets of this bill; it is my hope that the points I shared verbally were unique and clear.

I want to take a moment to briefly address some of what I heard, reiterate the most salient points, and request that you move this bill to the next steps.

Yesterday I heard concerns with multiple aspects of the charter school system and a call for a full review. Please don't let the fact that there is a lot of work to do stop us from addressing inequities in the funding model this budget cycle. There is no cost to the state, and this would be progress.

The 80%/95% inequity based on the age range of students is an outdated numeric, does not account for the early literacy emphasis that we now know is so critical for student success. It also disproportionately affects our schools that predominantly employ women, and in effect prevent charter schools from providing the wage and benefits to those populations that are traditionally underserved and are in most need of a sustainable living wage.

Having access to transportation and federal programs would help in this effort as well. In the case of the former, if coupled with the fix on the 80/95 problem, would allow my school to reach out to communities that cannot necessarily provide transportation and increase their opportunities and our diversity – we already have verbiage in our enrollment language to encourage traditionally underserved populations to join our school, yet transportation is a perennial problem.

There were concerns brought up about oversight and teacher licensure. I feel those are topics that can be addressed in later work, but are effectively moot for this argument because the intent of this bill as I see it is to address systemic inequities, not yet to revisit the entire charter system. That being said, I also feel these are topics worth consideration in future bills.

In conclusion I ask that you please move along HB 3444, even if only adjusting the inequitable 80%/95% allocation, this bill deserves broader conversation and consideration.

I sincerely thank you for your efforts,

Dave Wallace