



March 12, 2025

House Committee On Education
Oregon State Senate
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Siuslaw Valley Charter School:

As the Board Treasurer at the Siuslaw Valley 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 By passing HB 3444, we can fix the outdated issues with Oregon's school funding model and provide fair funding for public charter school students.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.

Here is why this matters. It takes approximately 2 years from the beginning the process of opening a charter school until the doors open to students. Until the doors open to students during that 2-year process, there is zero public funding available to our school. Yet, we have significant expenses for hiring a school superintendent and office manager to develop the policies

and procedures to meet the state and federal statutes of which there are many.

Because the doors are not yet open to students, we can't qualify for grants, apply for a school bond, or get a loan. In each of these cases, it takes 3 years of run rate to be able to access any funds. So, for that 2-year period, all the start-up funding including the school building is funded by donors. That in itself is a daunting task, but then when the doors are finally open, only 80% of the state school funds flow to the charter school. When you factor in the other funding that we get zero dollars, the reality is my school will only get one half of the funding for the same child that our district counterparts. So, in effect, we carry all the cost of the 2-year startup, then get half of the funding going forward for the very same child that our district counterparts get. This is compounded by the fact that as a charter school our contract with the school district requires the same policies, procedures, and processes that the school district complies with even though many of these are not required by statute for a charter school. While we are expected to deliver better results than our district counterparts.

How is this disparity in funding for the same child equitable?

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, I ask you to please support HB 3444.

Thank you,

Chuck Trent

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Board Treasurer, Siuslaw Valley Charter School