

I am writing to encourage your support for HB 3444. I am the mother of 2 young children ages 6 and 2. This year my oldest son started kindergarten. My son is neurodivergent and struggled with a speech delay. I knew a traditional elementary school setting would be a battle for him, but I believe in the value of public education so it was important to me that he attended a public school. We were tremendously lucky to be drawn in the lottery for a place at Springwater Environmental science charter school in Oregon City. This charter school was exactly what my son needed to thrive in a public school. I truly believe he would not have been this successful if he had gone to our traditional neighborhood school.

My son is a public school student in the Oregon City School District, but he is only provided 80% of the state funding. As a result of this funding gap, the families at our charter school have had to contribute in ways other public school families do not. We regularly have events for the families to socialize while landscaping the school grounds or painting the buildings. If the children need playground equipment, supplies, transportation, ect., we find a way to have it donated or start a fundraiser. It's not unusual to see play structures being assembled by a group of dads or donated trees being planted by the children. Our school does not have a cafeteria. There is simply a microwave in the gym for anyone to reheat their food. There is not a full time custodial staff. I have to dress my son in many layers because the heater in his classroom is old and in need of updating. At the beginning of the year we made a \$300 donation for the 2 buses that many students require for transportation to our rural school. Without the buses we would be forced to make the 40 minute round trip drive twice a day just so our child can attend his school. Filling in the funding gap for these children is difficult for working families in today's society. We know that all of this work is worth it for the incredible learning environment at our charter school, but it is frustrating to know the district is keeping 20% of the state funding for each child and giving us hardly anything in return.

It's even more frustrating to vote for a \$163 million dollar bond that allows the Oregon City School District to upgrade their facilities while knowing our son's school would not be eligible for any of that funding. Our property taxes will increase as we watch the elementary schools around us make improvements to their facilities. These are schools in the same public school district as our charter school. My son is a public school student in the same district, but his school only receives 80% of the funding that our neighbor's receive. Passing HB 3444 would make a huge impact for our public charter school. It would mean closing the funding gap and making sure all public school children in the same district are provided more equal state funding.

Charter schools are public schools. Why is my son worth 20% less than his peers in the same public school district? We need your support to continue to provide these children with innovative learning options so they can succeed in the public education system. We need you to pass HB 3444. Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

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