

**Testimony Before the House Committee on Education  
Regarding HB 3444  
March 12, 2025**

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kathryn Hickok. I am Executive Vice President at Cascade Policy Institute, a nonpartisan, nonprofit, public policy think tank based in Portland. Since 1991, Cascade has supported expanding education options for Oregon K-12 students. We also run a privately funded scholarship program, the Children’s Scholarship Fund-Oregon.

I write in support of House Bill 3444, which would increase the per-pupil education funding that’s allowed to “follow the child” when a student chooses to attend a public charter school.

Cascade Policy Institute has proudly championed charter schools since the 1990s. We helped launch Oregon’s charter school debate in 1993 and brought charter school expert Ted Kolderie to meet with Oregon education and business leaders to discuss this innovative public school model. Cascade’s *Charter Policy Handbook* helped lay the groundwork for the successful legislation that authorized charter schools in 1999. We have supported charter schools ever since.

Charter schools play an important role in Oregon’s education landscape. They expand education options available to parents and students, give educators opportunities to use their talents in innovative learning environments, and offer local communities more diversity among their public school options.

Charter schools are public schools, but charter school students receive a fraction of the funding allocated when children attend regular district public schools. It’s time to address this disparity so that charter schools—which successfully meet the academic and social needs of so many children—have the wherewithal to serve their students well.

A strong ecosystem of education choices is good for students, who have different learning needs, goals, and personal circumstances. Oregon education policies should value all options that empower students to achieve academic proficiency and reach their personal best, including Oregon charter schools.

