

3/6/2025

I am writing in support of House Bill 3444. This marks my seventeenth year as a teacher at Springwater Environmental Sciences School. Our public charter school receives only 80% of the funding that Oregon City's neighborhood public schools do.

Originally, the idea was that parents would make up for the 20% shortfall through fundraising and volunteering, and they did. Stay-at-home parents made working at Springwater School their unpaid jobs. They filled the roles of lunch helpers, tech support, maintenance crews, chaperones, reading buddies, and more. However, over the past decade I've seen volunteerism drop off precipitously, not because parents don't want to support our school, but because the current economic climate requires both parents to work full-time. Families simply can't get the time off to volunteer, nor can they make up for those lost volunteer hours by making financial donations to the school instead. Families are struggling to make ends meet, and as a result, so is our school.

Meanwhile, our school, built in the 1950s, is aging. Our furnace doesn't work reliably in winter. We don't have a functional kitchen, so we can't serve hot lunches. We don't have modern security measures like cameras and a buzz-in system. Oregon City School District keeps 20% of our students' federal funding while we do without these basics. Shouldn't our students attend school in a building that is warm, safe, and can feed them? Why should they receive less than other students in their home district simply because their public school also happens to be a charter school?

I'm glad I teach at a public charter school. I love that my school is small enough that I can greet each of our 200 students by name (and many of their parents too). I am proud that our graduates thrive in high school and many wind up in careers in the sciences and environmental fields. I enjoy the creative freedom of developing my own curriculum. I implore you to support SB 3444 so that my public charter school, and other charters doing important work in education can finally get the funding we deserve.

Sincerely,

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