

Submitter: Justin Botillier
On Behalf Of: Madrone Trail Public Charter School
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3444

My name is Justin Botillier, and I am the Board Treasurer for Madrone Trail Public Charter School in Central Point, Oregon, where I have served in this role for the past three years. I am also a parent of two daughters who attend the school, and our family has been part of the Madrone community for over seven years.

I'm writing in strong support of HB 3444. Charter schools provide a unique and vital opportunity within our public education system. They offer flexibility, creativity, and the ability to tailor educational approaches to the diverse needs, learning styles, and personalities of students. In many ways, they offer a private-school quality education without the financial barriers that prevent many families from accessing private options. This is an important pathway that should be protected and expanded.

Currently, Madrone Trail receives only 80% of the Average Daily Membership (ADM) funding allotted to Oregon public school students. We receive no additional financial support from our sponsoring district. While a special education teacher visits the school infrequently, the district receives funding separately for that position. This effectively means that the Medford School District receives hundreds of thousands of dollars for students it does not serve and contributes nothing toward their instruction.

Moreover, many of the students who find themselves struggling in traditional public school settings come to Madrone Trail. We serve a disproportionately high number of special needs students, and yet our teachers are paid significantly less than average. While we are fortunate to have a deeply committed and passionate staff, the lack of resources makes it increasingly difficult to retain those teachers, especially when they are pulled away by higher-paying positions elsewhere. Without additional funding, we cannot build the infrastructure necessary to meet our students' needs at the level they deserve.

I respectfully and urgently ask you to support HB 3444 and increase the funding passed through to charter schools like Madrone Trail. These schools are doing important, often challenging work, and they need equitable funding to continue serving the students who need them most.