

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

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

As a parent of an Oregon public charter school student, I am writing today in support of House Bill 3444. HB 3444 will fix a deep disparity currently happening in Oregon schools: that Oregon public charter school students are essentially funded at 48 cents on the dollar compared to district students. Public charter school students are public school students, and it's past time to fund their education fairly.

Almost every public charter school parent has a story as to why a public charter school became the right fit for their child. Many started out in traditional public schools, but couldn't receive the education they deserved, often due to learning challenges that required specialized attention beyond what a public school classroom could provide, or physical, developmental, or mental health challenges that public schools simply couldn't, or wouldn't, accommodate for.

My 10 year old child attends Portland Village School, a Waldorf based public charter school within Portland Public Schools, where she is thriving academically and socially. The school has provided the kind of support needed for her to balance her creative expression, academic growth, and personal development. The space within the curriculum that allows for special focus on visual arts, music, and a deep understanding of the natural world, has supported her overall development in immeasurable ways. The staff is tirelessly dedicated to their students, and the community of parents, students, and volunteers come together daily to support the school in numerous ways. As a parent volunteer, I have seen first hand the transformative effect the extra funding would have on our, and every, charter school.

Unfortunately, because of Oregon's current school funding model, public charter schools are significantly underfunded. Many buildings are old and in need of upgrades, students can't access transportation services, food security programs are limited, and schools lack essential school supplies and mental health resources. By passing HB 3444, you can fix this ongoing disparity and provide fair funding for public charter school students who deeply need it.

Please vote yes on HB 3444.

Thank you,

Jessica Hightower