

Submitter: Cathy Detrick
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3444
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 grandparent of an Oregon public charter school student, as well as a retired public school teacher, I am writing in support of House Bill 3444. HB 3444 will fix a deep disparity currently happening in Oregon schools: 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.

At its core, the disparity of funding between public charter vs. public schools is an issue of equity. For example, when ALL public school students within Oregon public school districts are able to receive free lunch this year, my grandchild along with her charter peers are denied access by the district because of their public charter status. When resources are only provided less than half of what's needed, teachers, students and parents unavoidably need to find additional resources, while time to do this could have been dedicated to instruction, student intervention, and much more. We, the families of charter students fulfill our tax duties. Our property tax dollars go into supporting public education. Why then, are we not granted equal access (charter students only receiving 48% of what public school peers are given) to this public funding? Parents and charter school staff alone should not be the ones to address this issue of equity but policy makers and school districts. Change needs to happen top down to show leaders actually believe in what they preach. If Oregon leaders believe in fairness, equity and education, this disparity between public schools and public charter needs to be addressed.

Many charter school facilities are old and in need of upgrades or are repurposed buildings; students can't access transportation services; food programs are limited or non-existent; and schools lack essential school supplies and mental health resources. By supporting HB 3444, you are standing up for the rights of all public school students—regardless of the type of school they attend. I respectfully ask you to vote in favor of this bill and work to ensure that charter school students are treated fairly under Oregon's education system.

As a grandparent, I have seen firsthand the positive impact that charter schools have on students. My grandchild has benefited greatly from the specialized curriculum, dedicated educators, and unique learning environment that their charter school provides.. However, none of these successes are sustainable without equitable funding compared to neighborhood public schools. Without fair financial support, charter schools will struggle to maintain the high standards and exceptional learning experiences that benefit so many students.

As a public school teacher for 28 years, grades kindergarten-5th grade, I have seen repeatedly what the consequences of lack of funding and/or equitable funding have on children, especially those already at risk of success. Many charter schools began, in part, to address early intervention for student success that was often lacking due to inequities in either funding, parental involvement, or community apathy toward the neighborhood school, or all of these things. I have been so impressed with the education my grandchild has received, and especially so with the dedication the entire school staff showed during the COVID educational period. Numerous research studies indicate how far many children had fallen behind during this time; my grandchild and fellow students excelled then and continue to do so, continuing to score far above the state and national rankings on standardized tests.

Please vote yes on HB 3444.

Thank you,

Cathy Detrick,

Retired teacher and grandparent of 5th grade student in a Beaverton Charter School