

Submitter: Colleen Smith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3444

Subject: Support for House Bill 3444 – Fair Funding for Public Charter Schools

Distinguished Legislator:

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 3444, which proposes to fund charter schools at 95% of the funding provided to traditional public schools in Oregon. I want to share some key reasons why supporting this bill is important to our family, our children's learning styles and our Montessori school community:

1. **Unique Educational Approach:** Montessori schools emphasize self-directed learning, individualized instruction, and the development of the whole child—intellectually, socially, and emotionally. This method has been proven to foster critical thinking, creativity, and independence in students. Many of the graduates go on to become entrepreneurs because they can think outside of the box!
2. **Equity and Access to High-Quality Education:** Montessori education has traditionally been available primarily in private settings, making it out of reach for many families due to cost. House Bill 3444 will make Montessori, arts education, environmentally focused schools and language immersion programs more accessible to all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background. This will allow families in underserved communities to have access to a learning model that is tailored to their children's needs.
3. **Parental Choice and Community Empowerment:** Parents across Oregon are seeking more educational options for their children, and charter schools offer an attractive alternative to traditional public schools. My daughter completed kindergarten and first grade at a traditional public elementary school. It was clear after the second year that this setting was not ideal. She was very distracted by the behaviors of other students, stressed by the behavior modification system (we wanted her to behave properly because it was the right thing to do, not to get a prize!), she had her recess time withheld for being squirrely, her body was hurting from the amount of time she spent in a chair at a desk, she was becoming a "grade collector" and losing her love of learning! All of that changed the following year, when she enrolled at a Montessori charter school. She was engaged in cooperative style learning that was joyful and inclusive. The lower elementary classrooms have one table for sitting, one for kneeling, offer lap desks to sit on the floor, and allow children to work laying on their stomachs. She is flourishing in this environment and if this school weren't available or can't continue to survive because it has to pay fair-market rent/utilities, I would be inclined to homeschool.

House Bill 3444 offers an important opportunity to enhance access to specialized education for students in Oregon and ensure that they receive the education that is most appropriate for their specific learning style.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Colleen Smith
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The Community Roots School