

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, attending **Springwater Environmental Sciences School**, 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.

Funding for charter schools like Springwater Environmental Sciences School is essential to maintaining the unique educational experiences that make them so impactful. As a small school with a strong sense of community, Springwater thrives on parent involvement, hands-on learning, and outdoor exploration. The ability to integrate environmental sciences across the curriculum and provide real-world, experiential learning, such as the invaluable Friday Field Study, depends on adequate financial support. Without proper funding, these enriching opportunities that foster curiosity, creativity, and a deep connection to nature could be at risk.

Our family's journey highlights just how much a school like Springwater can mean to a child. Our son struggled in his district Kindergarten. Having been an only child with a stay-at-home parent his entire life, the transition was overwhelming. Mornings were filled with tears as he clung to the doorframe, begging not to go. Drop-offs became a heartbreaking battle, with some days

ending in him missing school altogether because staff couldn't assist in getting him out of the car. One particularly difficult moment was when he wet himself after being overlooked while trying to ask for a bathroom break, something that crushed his already shy spirit. But the day we stepped onto Springwater's campus, everything changed. He was excited, happy, and eager to be there, remembering the space from previously attending preschool there. Seeing that difference brought tears to my eyes. Now, every first day of school is a celebration, with parents and students gathering together to mingle and share a light breakfast and listen to the Principal share his welcome for the start of a new year. It is a wonderful community event. I get tearful every year, overwhelmed with gratitude for a school that not only educates but nurtures and embraces each child. Charter school funding ensures that Springwater can continue providing this kind of supportive, inclusive environment—one that truly changes lives.

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,

[Teressa Mitchell-Sears](#) & Chad Sears, charter school parents