

Submitter: Gentry Richardson
On Behalf Of: Bend International School
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3444

My name is Gentry Richardson, and I am both a proud parent in the Bend-La Pine School District and a strong advocate for equitable education funding.

I have two children—one in a fully funded district school and another at Bend International School, a public charter that receives only 80% of the per-student funding for grades K-5. That 20% gap has real consequences. Unlike district schools, BIS must cover facilities, maintenance, technology, HR, transportation, and all major services entirely on its own. And yet, despite these challenges, BIS remains an asset to our community—offering a globally focused, innovative education that strengthens the district as a whole.

That is why I am here tonight—to ask for your leadership in ensuring that Bend International School receives 95% per-student funding for all grades.

BIS students are your students. They are part of this district, yet they do not have equal access to the same resources and opportunities. Underfunding forces charter schools to do more with less, even though they are held to the same academic standards as district schools. The additional funding would have a profound impact, especially for K-5 students, where resources are stretched thinnest.

The district has already recognized the importance of equitable funding by setting middle school funding at 95%. That decision has made a substantial difference. So why not K-5? If equity matters for older students, it should matter for our youngest learners as well. This is not about special treatment—this is about fairness.

Bend-La Pine has an opportunity to be a leader in innovation by supporting public charter schools that offer diverse, high-quality educational options. Meeting BIS at 95% funding would demonstrate a true commitment to equity, ensuring that all students—regardless of the school they attend—have access to the resources they need to thrive.

I urge you to do what's right for our kids and our community. Let's make equitable funding a reality.

Thank you.