

Testimony before the PPS Bond Accountability Committee

John A. Charles, Jr.
President, Cascade Policy Institute
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Members of the Committee, my name is John Charles, representing Cascade Policy Institute. Cascade is a non-profit policy research organization, incorporated in 1991. We have many supporters living within the PPS boundaries.

Over the past three years I have followed PPS bond planning and spending carefully. I watch and/or attend all the BAC meetings and [testified](#) about six months ago. I want to underscore what an important service you are providing to district taxpayers.

I was pleased that your most recent [report](#) to the PPS Board included the following statement on page 5:

The BAC would like to share the opinion that the district should not be building such large high schools when there is not the student body to justify it. Given declining enrollment and decreasing birth rates this issue is even more pronounced given the project budget issues.

I agree with your assessment, so I was disappointed to see the reaction of the PPS Board when your Committee Chair made her presentation a few weeks ago. They had no interest in seriously engaging with the topic.

In fact, they never have. Former Director Scott Baily made the same points in testimony last February, and his advice was ignored.

Fortunately, you don't actually work for the Board. You report to District voters. They are the ones who authorized bond sales, and the role of the BAC was spelled out in the bond referral language.

In fact, the work of the BAC plays a prominent role in every bond campaign, because Board members know that voters don't trust politicians when it comes to money. Bond supporters always promise that expenditures will be closely vetted by the BAC to make sure that District leaders are carrying out their fiduciary duties.

In my opinion, overbuilding the next three high schools by several thousand seats is a breach of that duty. The BAC has called it out and I encourage you to now communicate independently with voters.



One possibility would be to write a short letter to the editor of *The Oregonian*, repeating what you said to the Board.

You could also try to schedule meetings with the editorial boards of newspapers that endorsed the 2025 bond.

Regardless of what option you choose, please do not become passive victims of the Board's indifference. Voters desperately need your expertise and independent thinking.

If the Board isn't interested, speak directly to the taxpayers who will have to pay for the hundreds of millions of dollars in unnecessary construction costs.

Thank you for your service, and for listening to my testimony.

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