

QuickPoint! • Dear PPS Bond Committee: Please Tell the Taxpayers

By John A. Charles, Jr.

Cascade's president, John Charles, testified online at the Portland Public Schools' (PPS) Bond Accountability Committee ([BAC](#)) meeting this week. He commended the BAC's work in reviewing the \$2 billion PPS 2025 bond and agreed with their assessment that building three large high schools when enrollment is declining is a mistake.

Testimony before the PPS Bond Accountability Committee

John A. Charles, Jr.

President, Cascade Policy Institute

October 29, 2025

Members of the Committee, my name is John Charles, representing Cascade Policy Institute. Cascade is a non-profit policy research organization, incorporated in 1991. Many of our supporters live 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. The volunteer work you are doing is important and I want to express my personal appreciation.

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

“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.”

I agree with your assessment and was disappointed to see the reaction of the Board two weeks ago when Kara made her presentation. They had no interest in discussing the size of schools.

In fact, they never have. They have always been wedded to an enrollment size of 1,700 in the name of “equity,” even though students gain nothing from unused space.

Fortunately, you don't work for the Board. You report to District voters. They are the ones who authorized bond sales.

October 30, 2025

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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.

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

Read John Charles' October 29 written [testimony](#) to the PPS Bond Accountability Committee.

John A. Charles, Jr. is the President and CEO of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.

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