

Thank you for reading my testimony today. I wish to voice my support for SB 240. I am a native Oregonian who was raised in the rural Willamette Valley area. In my adult life, I have lived with my husband and children in rural Newberg for 18 years. My husband is also a native Oregonian, raised in the Willamette Valley. We have attended seven different public and private schools in Oregon, from kindergarten through graduate level.

I am an Oregon public school teacher who has taught in two bricks and mortar school districts and one online public charter school.

My two children attended school in our local district until the COVID restrictions began in March 2020. I knew that the supplemental educational resources that our local district was offering would not be sufficient to meet their educational needs for the rest of the school year. Our school district had an online academy, but this option provided no live teaching. My 3rd grader needed a live teaching element, as many elementary-aged students do.

Thus, we enrolled them in Frontier Charter Academy, an innovative Oregon online public charter school. The school has offered my 6th grader many options for accelerated studies. He is TAG for Math and Language Arts and at our local bricks and mortar school, the sole accelerated course that he would be allowed to take would be a grade level up for Math. Whereas, at Frontier, there are 5 classes that middle schoolers can take for high school credit: Geometry, Algebra, English, History, and Spanish. My son is currently taking high school Spanish and loving it. Also, at Frontier each middle school course has an "Honors" option, which offers more challenging work to students who desire it. It is open to any student who wants that option, regardless of TAG designation, etc. This helps those bright students who are not invested in many aspects of school, but who love to learn and desire to engage deeply with subject matter. I have had many of these students over the years. Traditional education often fails them.

Online charter schooling is not for every family. Many parents do not desire to be their children's learning coach at home and/or parents are not able to be at home during the day. Many students do not learn well online and need the in-person aspect of going to a school building. This will always be the case. However, other students like my son are thriving with all of the opportunities that his online charter school provides.

If options are not offered to families, districts will lose students to private schooling and homeschooling. As a middle class family living in Oregon, private schooling is not a viable financial option for us. We are a one income family that strongly values education and we are saving to pay for college tuition, the cost of which continues very steeply upward.

By allowing this bill to move forward today, you are recognizing that education is not a one-size-fits-all proposition.

This bill provides equity for ALL Oregon families who want this option for their children.

Respectfully submitted,
Ursa Shaw, M.A.T.