

My husband and I are a blended family with four children. When we submitted our letter of intent to enroll our children in a virtual public charter school, we were denied by the Greater Albany School District. In their denial letter the district noted that it had reached the three percent threshold for the number of students from the district that can enroll in full-time virtual public charter schools.

Each of our children has a unique learning style and three have underlying health conditions. I believe a full-time virtual public charter school is the best fit for them. My 8-year-old son was born premature with undeveloped lungs. He spent four months in the hospital and continues to rely on two different inhalers to breathe. My 14-year-old son has ADHD, oppositional defiance disorder and is on an IEP. He loses focus easily and needs breaks throughout the day. My 16-year-old daughter has ADHD and suffers from severe anxiety. My 11-year-old son, has no underlying health conditions or learning challenges, but I wanted to keep my children together in the same school program.

After being denied by my school district due to the three percent enrollment cap, I appealed the district's decision to the Oregon Department of Education. I was hopeful that my children's underlying health conditions and learning needs as well as my desire to keep them together would compel the state to overturn the district's denial. Unfortunately, the state upheld the district's decision to deny my children enrollment in a full-time virtual public charter school. I was heartbroken by the district's and the state's decision. As a parent, I know my children and I know what education option will work best for them.

The legislature needs to raise the three percent enrollment cap on full-time virtual public charter schools so more families like ours can take advantage of this important education option. School districts and the state shouldn't be deciding where kids go to school — parents should!

Sincerely,  
Renee True, Albany