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On Behalf Of:  
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Educational equity is vital for the community. That is why I am submitting my testimony as someone whose child has benefited from a public charter school and who does not believe that anyone desiring this educational option should be denied on the basis of how many students in their district have also chosen this option.

My son left the residential district to attend his first charter program in October of 2019. The reasons we left are not important to this discussion except to say that he was removed due to the home district not providing the special education supports on the IEP that I saw he required as well as some physical safety concerns. I won't go into details, but school had become a place that was not safe for him physically, mentally, or educationally. I withdrew him as my last resort. I did not have a rosy picture of homeschooling and thought it would be fun, I did not wish to educate my child due to religious reasons, and I did not want to remove him from social engagements.

I was lucky that we were able to get into a charter at that time and that the school district agreed to release us. What we didn't know at the time, of course, was that the pandemic was about to hit. During the pandemic the needs of "special" education students have fallen to the side, in some cases the schools are sending these kids home without supports.

Unfortunately, the reason we chose to school at home with a public charter is far from a unique situation. Many families have struggled with the school to provide the proper supports and been denied. Or families have discovered that the school environment contradicts what is best for their child.

While these families have never been barred from traditional homeschooling where the families take on all the responsibility for the education of their children, they have been denied access to a public education that meets the needs of their children, especially children with IEPs or in other ways have needs that are not the same as other students. The reason they have been barred from this is to allow the local schools to continue receiving funding for these children they are not providing an education for.

By blocking these families from receiving access to online charters, they are not getting access to a public school option that would provide an equitable education.

Let me be clear: a family using a charter school has many more responsibilities and

oversight than one who homeschools in the traditional manner.

I must submit lesson plans, do daily check-ins, have my son do testing, and many other things. As a community, we should be encouraging families to enroll in public charter schools at home instead of pulling their children entirely from the system. One of the arguments about homeschool is that it allows families to do as they please and the children fall through the cracks. The public school option of an online charter solves this with checkins and ensuring the children and families are being supported.

The funding that is provided is heavily guarded and is strictly for educational supplies. This money is in no way enriching families or "giving them money" beyond the educational needs of their children.

If the local school cannot support these children for whatever reason and the families want to take on the responsibility of educating them with the guidance of a distance learning charter school, they should always have this option. Not allowing this option puts students, especially "special" education students, at a disadvantage and does not provide equitable education or access to education.

The online school options provided by the schools are not comparable to what a distance learning charter school provides. The charter school works with families to choose the curriculum best suited to the child, allows flexibility in schedules, allows children to learn in a way that fits them best, and gives them the equitable education that every Oregon child is entitled to.