

Submitter: Laurie McDowell
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1552

Please remove the 3% school enrollment in virtual school academies. It is out of date for our times in light of a pandemic that has shed light on virtual opportunities like never before. Some businesses, doctors, consultants never plan to go back to pre-pandemic virtual times. Schools need to change too.

For our 8th grade son with learning delays, we tried 2 different private schools, and public school. None of them worked well. I never thought home school would be a good fit for him. However, once COVID forced us home, my son began to thrive. He learned he was a verbal processor and needed to talk out his thoughts, which is not conducive to a classroom setting.

He also has ADHD and struggled with getting distracted when he was finished with his class, but had to wait for others, or had to wait in-between classes. His ADHD meds would wear off and the last few hours at school were so unproductive for him and he became a distraction for others. He had to re-do the 5th grade because of this.

Last year, we were fortunate to be a part of the 3% so our son could enroll at the Oregon Charter Academy (ORCA). In virtual school, he can keep up his momentum and jump from live class to live class or fill in gaps with homework from other classes. He LOVES the empowerment and gets everything done before his medication has worn off. He is ACTUALLY learning! He went from several F's in the 'standard education format', to making Honor Role this last semester at ORCA!

His confidence has skyrocketed! He asked us last year if he could continue virtual school at ORCA all the way through high school and was thrilled when we said yes!

Before COVID, our son was defeated with school and would have at least 3 hours of homework in the evenings to complete the assignments he couldn't focus on during those last few hours in the classroom. With ORCA, he stays focused and is completely done with live class and assignments by 1:30pm. This has freed up his evenings and he has joined Tualatin Hill's Water Polo team. He's a star player! Before virtual school, our son's weekends would consist of make-up assignments that he was unable to complete in the classroom environment. Now, he volunteers in our church nursery playing with the toddlers. He is a valuable team member!

I am FOREVER grateful for ORCA and how my son has re-gained his LOVE for learning! I am so sad to hear that other children are being denied this opportunity

because of an archaic law. My son-in-law's sister in Springfield, Oregon is being denied virtual school because of this law and it's a crime considering all the other hardships these kids are overcoming. We owe a variety of education styles to this BRAVE generation of children who are trying to progress through this pandemic.

Thank you,
Laurie McDowell