

Submitter: Mathyew DePlois
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1552

My name is Matthew DePlois and I work as a Direct Support Professional providing assistance and advocacy for individuals with disabilities. I currently work with an 11 year old child who is on the autism spectrum and has developmental delays. Part of my job is ensuring his safety and well-being, something that currently is more possible given that he can do online schooling. My client and his family have found a lot of relief in him being able to attend online school. Given the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, having the option to do online school helps ensure that he can learn in a safe environment.

Limiting students' choice of schooling especially during an ongoing pandemic is deeply unfair and potentially dangerous. The idea that a student will be denied access to an online school program simply because of high demand is denying them the right to a safe, accessible education. All students should have the right to choose which type of schooling is best and/or safest for them. A child should not be forced to attend a school environment that would potentially put their lives at risk because other options aren't available. Parents should not have to worry about the health and safety of their child while they try to attain an education.

I have been able to see firsthand the benefits of online schooling for my client. Not only does it allow him to learn from the safety of his own home, it is also structured in a way that allows him to have much more agency over his day and lesson plans that are more conducive to the way he learns. Online schooling is an amazing option not only for those who would be at risk in a public school environment, it also allows them to have the kind of education program that will work best for them. Even outside of pandemic conditions students should still be allowed to choose the type of schooling that will be most effective for them. As somebody who works with neurodivergent children I understand that traditional mainstream schooling is not the right option for every student. Students are able to thrive when they are able to receive one-on-one attention, have direct feedback from their teachers, and access to resources that support their learning.

The 3% student cap denies students the chance at a program that will allow them to be more successful than the traditional alternative. Students should not be denied the choice simply because many other students in the area want to make a similar choice. Online schooling has shown itself to be an effective alternative to traditional in-person school. We now have the infrastructure and experience to continue making online schooling a viable option even outside of pandemic conditions. All students should have the right to choose the right kind of education for them. Forcing students

into a program that will either put them at risk or deny them a chance at a successful education is potentially disenfranchising students who don't have other options. As somebody born and raised in Oregon and brought up through a public Oregon school system I know Oregon cares about its students. One way Oregon can continue to support their students is to take away the 3% student cap and allow all students the same choice to make a decision that is best for them.

Students should not be made to choose between their health and safety and an education. Education should be made as safe and accessible as possible, and if that means changing our laws and infrastructure to do that we have a moral obligation to do so for our future generations. Please think of the students with disabilities, the students who are medically fragile, and the students who are neurodivergent who need you to make the right decision to make and keep education safe and accessible for all students.

Thank you for your time and for reading my words and considering everybody's opinions in this matter.