



February 24, 2022

Senate Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St., NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Testimony in support of SB1552

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen, Members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Tricia Powell. I live in Roseburg. I'm the parent of two virtual public charter school students and the President of the Oregon Virtual Public Schools Alliance, a coalition of parents who have joined together to advocate for our education choice. I'm submitting comments in support of Senate Bill 1552 to remove the enrollment cap on virtual charter schools.

Policies like the 3% percent enrollment cap on full-time virtual public charter schools have prohibited thousands of Oregon students from seeking this proven education option. While access to these schools has been a challenge since the enrollment cap was enacted more than 10 years ago, the pandemic has only succeeded in accelerating this problem. We heard from families in school districts around the state who were denied enrollment in virtual public charter schools during the 2020/2021 school year because their district hit the 3% cap.

A recent KGW story featured a student who sought to enroll in a virtual charter school to escape bullying at her local brick-and-mortar public school. But her district had hit the 3% enrollment cap and she was denied enrollment in the school of her choice. What message does this send our kids? Our education system can't protect you or it won't protect you? Students should feel safe in school and be able to attend the school that meets their individual needs and learning style. Unfortunately, the enrollment cap is limiting access for hundreds of students across the state. As a legislative body that is committed to equity, access and fairness in education, it's disappointing that access, equity and fairness seemingly don't apply to students currently enrolled or seeking to enroll in a full-time virtual public charter school.

PO Box 1652, Lake Oswego OR 97035
866.961.3731
info@oregonvirtualschools.org



Online charter schools aren't for everyone, but they need to be available to anyone who chooses to utilize them. It's time that you and your colleagues support parents and students, whether they're already in a virtual charter school or seeking admission. You need to stand up for families and make sure those options are available. Do what's best for Oregon families and remove the enrollment cap on virtual charter schools.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tricia F. Powell
President

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