

February 24, 2022

To: Oregon Senate Education Committee

From: Ava Brown, Junior, Willamette Connections Academy

To many students, online school gives them an environment to comfortably receive an education they deserve. Schools like Willamette Connections Academy give students an option, including much more advantages than public schools. The teachers will always make time for questions and concerns sent by parents and their kids, and will never turn a blind eye to a student struggling. This online school to some kids, is an escape from bullying. Connections Academy makes sure no student has to experience any type of harassment, they practice spreading kindness and respect. Never once have I encountered or seen something negative being said towards someone in this school. That is one of the biggest reasons many kids go to Connections, is to get away from all of the negativity.

Mental health is never seen as an unimportant topic at Willamette Connections Academy. Students are encouraged to open up if something is really bothering them, whether it be within or outside the school. The staff understand the importance of mental health, and are always there to figure out a plan. They help build a stress-free schedule with school, and even talk to your other teachers with you to let them know what's going on. A student's education is important to them, but your health comes before that.

Connections Academy has been very helpful throughout my years in school. It let me learn at a good pace throughout elementary, and prepared me for traditional public school. I was self-disciplined in regular public school and was responsible with all of my school work. My teachers at school would always compliment and comment how mature I was, because of my self-management. When I came back to online learning at Connections for freshman year (due to COVID), the format was still easy as ever. I had no complications when it came to getting back into the flow of things. I never had to worry about sitting in front of a screen for 5 hours a day for a zoom class. All of my classes are spread out during the week.

Doing schoolwork online full-time has also become really convenient with my work schedule for my job. I get to work in the morning and afternoons, thanks to online school. I don't have to worry about coming home from school, then rushing to work and not coming home till 8. Connections Academy gives me the schedule I need to do other things in my life.

I wish for our state leaders should realize in-person, physical schools, do not benefit everybody. Especially during times like these. Everyone has different reasons on why they attend Connections Academy, and they are all valid reasons. There shouldn't be a limit on who can enroll to Connections. Students shouldn't feel panicked, hoping they get accepted in. Every student should be allowed to make the choice of either going to in-person or online school. It is their education and their mental health, and that should be most important to the leadership at the capitol.

Thank you,

Ava Brown

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