

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, Thank you for listening to us today. My name is Heidi Smith, and I drove here this morning from Prineville along with two of my four sons.

I want to begin by saying how much I appreciate the American value, FREEDOM to choose, which has defined great Americans who have fought and died so that we can live in freedom in our state of Oregon and in my small town in Crook county.

I am here today to oppose SB 761 and 508. Am I reading it right when it says, "an emergency is declared to exist pertaining to SB 761 and the act is necessary for the immediate preservation of public peace, health, and safety?" Come on, you would think they were referring to public brick and mortar schools if they are going to declare a state of emergency, not virtual learning! We are parents who care about our children and their education, and we have chosen a sound program with state certified instructors. ORVA works because it is education driven without a lot of unnecessary distractions.

We love ORVA because the teachers are involved and accessible in a way that makes the system work well! Without feeling left in the dark, parents can closely work with their teachers to help our kids reach their goals. We are able to know exactly what our children are being taught. The teachers are always there right at the tip of our fingers to offer suggestions and encouragement and challenges to become better learners! We are at a crossroads with this new style of learning and quality on-line school is the future. ORVA has given my boys "educational wings" and I cannot make my children regress after exposing them to such an amazing education.

According to SB 761, we need a task force to try to search for a problem with a program that is already measurable and getting amazing results as an alternative to a program that is not getting positive results for many kids.

What we really need are jobs. Why don't we focus on these issues, instead of unnecessarily growing government again by creating another task force? We cannot afford this right now!

I see SB 508 as nothing but restricting our access to a better education alternative for my children in a small town that does not have many options. Please don't limit our family's ability to try to educate our children in a way that works better for us. How can it be in the best interest of Oregon kids? Let us not forget what the end goal really is, it is to educate our children so that they can become contributing members in our communities! If virtual academies can help parents reach that goal, then why would you want to make it more difficult for the parents by restricting enrollments?

My fifth grade son just finished reading Johnny Tremain for his literature novel in ORVA. Have you guys read it? If not, perhaps you should. As Esther Forbes told us in this timeless classic, the price of revolution was "so that a man can stand up." So let us be able to choose in Oregon how we think is best to educate our own children. Don't limit our opportunities for greatness, and do not allow our inheritance to be stolen by taking away our freedom to choose great education. Thank you.