

**February 6, 2016**

**To:** House Education Committee

**From:** Bonita Fillmore, 1803 Lancaster Ave., Klamath Falls, OR 97601

**Re:** Junior and Senior High Schools Online (HB 4091)

My granddaughter attended Oregon Connections Academy when it was based out of Scio, Oregon for her 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. She chose to go there because she was having problems in her Newberg Middle School due to her height, her shyness, her Asperger's syndrome and unresolved conflicts. She and her parents are highly tech oriented and it seemed an ideal solution. I heard many glowing comments in the beginning that disappeared as the year progressed. I later found out that each teacher was supposed to call her once a week personally to check up on her, answer questions and give encouragement. By the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, only one teacher was calling and that was becoming sporadic. She had gone from enthused about the online school to negative. Studying and doing the work became a struggle and a major bone of contention in the family. She literally wilted without their attention and her connection to her teachers.

At the end of that year, her family moved to Springfield where she found a school she liked. She had to repeat her 7<sup>th</sup> grade year there. She went on to attend 3A, Academy of Arts and Academics in Springfield, doing well and graduating.

Personally, I believe that technology can enhance education, but at its core the connection and relationship between the student and the teacher is what fundamentally drives education to be effective. Because of her experience, I worry that non college age students attending only online schools miss out on that relationship as well as the opportunity to meet and create relationships with peers at a time when that is essential to their development. I worry that missing those experiences help create a growing segment of our population that is isolated, disenfranchised and prone to violence or to cult/gang/terrorist cell membership. I know the last is an extreme projection, but it still bubbles up. I worry that kids like my granddaughter who have Asperger's syndrome and other special needs are not getting them addressed in an online school. I hope I am wrong and worrying about problems that are being handled in a way that meets their needs and works to include them as vital, active citizens of our great country. I hope that the study called for in HB 4091 may bring these issues to light. Thank you for your consideration of this perspective.