

Madame Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Debbie Thibodeaux. I have three children, in attendance today, who are enrolled in the Oregon Virtual Academy. We live in Gresham, and our family has chosen to be a part of a virtual school for over seven years. Thank you so much for allowing me to speak to you today.

I am testifying in opposition of House Bill 4091. This proposed bill would create yet another study of virtual schools in Oregon. My question for you is, "Why do we need to spend \$100,000 of the Oregon taxpayers' money to study schools that are already more intensely examined and rigorously regulated than any brick and mortar school in the state?"

I can testify that virtual schools are an effective, successful schooling option for Oregon families, not only because of our own experience but because as I've gathered with other virtual school families at outings around the Portland area, I consistently hear the same report: Parents are thankful for the virtual school option and glad they made the choice to enroll their students, and students are actively learning and excited about their studies, about time spent with their parents and other learning coaches, and about the opportunities afforded by participating in a virtual school.

My own students are in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 1<sup>st</sup> grade this year. Our family chose to try the virtual school option because we knew my oldest daughter was an avid reader and a quick learner. Many warned us that she would be bored and frustrated in a traditional Kindergarten classroom. In addition, my husband travels with his work, and being a part of a virtual school allows us to travel with him, keeping our family relationships healthy and intact. Once we were involved in ORVA, we realized many other benefits: excellent curriculum, connections with teachers who provide constant feedback and build strong mentoring relationships with students, efficient use of our time, and opportunities beyond those available to regular brick and mortar students (including an active interest in the political process of Oregon, just as you're seeing today. Our family has hosted both Senator Monnes Anderson and Representative Gorsek in our home for demo lessons, and we visit both of our legislators annually here at the capitol.)

HB 4091 may seem like a harmless study (albeit with a large price tag), but I believe that it is yet another attempt to harass and oppose the virtual public schools of Oregon. I strongly urge you to oppose this bill. Thank you, again, for giving me your attention.