



Joint Interim Committee on the First Special Session of 2020
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Testimony in support of LC 76 – increasing the enrollment cap on online schools

Dear Co-Chairs Courtney, Kotek, Girod and Drazan and Members of the Committee:

Oregon has a long history of allowing parents to seek the education environment that works best for our kids. Particularly in a time of COVID-19 and uncertainty around classroom learning this fall, parents need access to alternatives we think will keep our kids on track.

Unfortunately, decisions will be made in the next week that may deny parents online learning options. This is not the time to be telling parents we can't choose the online learning environment we think will best suit our kids.

In 2011, the Oregon State Legislature placed a cap of 3% on the number of kids in a school district that can transfer to full-time online schools. Nearly 10 years later, that number hasn't been adjusted to account for growth. With COVID-19 closing traditional classrooms around the state, more and more parents are seeking better online learning options and school districts are hitting that 3% cap. What happens when that 3% cap gets hit? Parents in that district are out of luck. We have only one option: enrolling in a traditional brick-and-mortar school, regardless of whether it's equipped for online learning.

A bill will be debated this week to temporarily lift the 3% cap and allow more parents to seek online alternatives. That's a good thing. But, in July 2021 the draft bill proposes to take the cap back down to where it was, which would simply throw families out of the online school they may want to stay in. **The right solution is lifting the cap permanently so that parents have access to online schools now and, if it's working for them, in the future.**

Some education special interests are trying to keep the 3% cap because they want to protect the status quo. This is wrong. We shouldn't force parents to move their kids in and out of schools because of an arbitrary cap. If the online school is working for them, let them stay.

Please support permanently increasing the arbitrary cap on enrollment in online schools.

Thank you for standing up for parents around Oregon who are struggling to keep our kids' education on track during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Tricia F. Powell
President
Oregon Virtual Public Schools Alliance