



Joint Interim Committee on Policies for the Second Special Session
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

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

Dear Co-Chairs Manning and Bynum and Members of the Committee:

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.

Thirteen school districts have reported to the state that they have already hit the cap and more will soon follow, leaving parents with few options for the fall. Parents can appeal if they're rejected by a district that has hit the cap, and over 100 families from around the state have submitted an appeal to ODE. Most won't hear back until late August, less than two weeks before the start of the school year, and there's no guarantee that ODE will approve their appeal.

Why should parents have to justify their decision based on an arbitrary cap enacted a decade ago? Parents know what's best for their children and the cap is unfairly prohibiting parents from sending their children to the school of their choice.

In a recent press release, Gov. Brown stated, "I am pushing school officials to make sure underserved and marginalized students—our kids of color and our low-income kids—get the support and opportunities they need. We cannot allow our response to this pandemic to increase racial disparities in educational outcomes."

Underserved and marginalized students need choices and opportunities, and the 3% cap is creating random disparities between students based solely on whether or not they live in a district that has hit the cap.

It's time that you and your colleagues support parents and students, whether they're already in an online public school or seeking admission. We need leaders willing to stand up for families and make sure those options are available. **I urge you to do what's best for Oregon families and enact a modest, permanent increase in the cap on online public 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tricia F. Powell".

Tricia F. Powell
President
Oregon Virtual Public Schools Alliance