



Chair Dembrow, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Tricia Powell. I'm from Roseburg and I'm the parent of two full-time virtual public charter school students. I'm testifying today on behalf of the Oregon Virtual Public Schools Alliance, a coalition of families whose children are enrolled or who are seeking to enroll in a full-time virtual public charter school.

As you discuss the state's plan for school reopening, I hope the committee will recognize the need to eliminate barriers and expand access to educational choice for Oregon families. Oregonians have seen during this pandemic that education shouldn't be one-size-fits-all. There should be options and choices that fit a family's needs. Onerous and arbitrary restrictions like the 3% enrollment cap on full-time virtual public charter schools restrict access and choice for families.

Full-time virtual public charter schools are a vital and sustainable educational tool. They are a critical option for families who need an alternative to a traditional classroom and they have been able to continue to provide a proven, quality education for students, without interruption during the pandemic. They have platforms and technology in place that are working well for students. The legislature needs to pass laws that embrace innovation and efficiency, rather than restrict and stifle opportunity.

I was glad to see that the Senate Democrats have committed to promoting access and equity in public education. Of course, I feel that access and equity should apply to full-time virtual school students by allowing them to attend the school that will best serve their educational needs and individual interests. To this end, the 3% enrollment cap for full-time virtual public school charter schools has negatively impacted thousands of students who would prefer to utilize a proven online option. We understand this committee has a few bills related to the 3% cap that will increase the number of students that can choose this option. Since the law is now 10 years old, it should be increased to expand access and equity for all students, including full-time public virtual charter school students.

I hope you will support policies that provide the best educational opportunities for Oregon students, whether in a brick and mortar public school or a full-time virtual public charter school.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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