

I'm writing you today to implore you to support SB 240 that would remove the limitation of percentage of our children for attending a virtual public charter school.

Our daughter who is currently in the second grade has always been advanced. When she was four years old, instead of another year of preschool, we utilized a virtual public charter school in which we could choose her curriculum. We chose a kindergarten curriculum for her that aligned with her educational needs, and she thrived. Then the next year we placed in her public school for kindergarten (again). For the last couple of years while she was in public school, we could see her learning was stagnating and she was being taught concepts she had already mastered.

By the time she was in second grade, we had discovered that she wasn't learning much; she already knew the concepts her teacher was teaching. So, we decided to re-enroll her in a virtual public charter school again in which we could be more involved and have more control over her academics and curriculum. It has been a tremendous blessing for her!

To account for her social needs, we make it a priority to schedule playdates regularly for her with other children. Additionally, she's enrolled in many enrichment activities in the community, including ballet, gymnastics, piano and horseback riding lessons. We could not be as involved with these extracurricular activities when she was placed in public school, all day, Monday through Friday, because of the time constraints from my career and my husband's job. The flexibility we have as a family being able to homeschool our kids based on OUR schedules (not the rigid public school's schedule) has been invaluable for us.

CURRICULUM CHOICE

By enrolling her in the virtual charter school, my husband and I were able to choose from several curriculums. (Parents can't do this in public and, I believe, private schools.) We chose a curriculum that was more paper-pencil based vs. online screens, which we felt was best so she wasn't in front of a screen all day. We also had the option of being able to choose academic materials/curriculum based on her individual academic needs, with the guidance and expertise of Oregon-licensed teachers. For example, most of the curriculum materials we chose for her were 3rd grade level (vs. 2nd grade level which is what she's supposed to be in this year). This has allowed her to learn so much more, and it was a correct "fit" for her as it aligned with her academic level...and she loves it! In the public schools, her teachers always knew she was advanced, so they'd simply give her extra homework to do (that other kids didn't have to do). It really didn't do much. But what she's been learning this year has been INCREDIBLE. My husband and I KNOW that she would not be learning all the amazing concepts she's learning right now if she was in the public school system.

SCHEDULE/FLEXIBILITY

The public/private (online) school schedule is strict, and parents have to plan their lives around it. With the virtual charter school, WE get to plan our schedule however we want and what best fits our needs. This is extremely important to us as both my husband and I work. I have a career, and I'm working from home. I have meetings and phone calls throughout my days. For example, with the charter school, if I have several meetings on Wednesday morning, I'll tell my daughter that we're postponing her schooling until the afternoon, or sometimes the evening or weekend. Also, because of our jobs, we have chosen to do literature and social studies 3-4 nights per week (as I cannot tackle these meaty subjects during the day). Having this flexibility has been a life saver for our entire family and has kept everyone happier and sane. In fact, having homeschool become a part of our everyday lives has been fun and productive and has connected us so much more as a family.

School choice for families is extremely important. In fact, please read the following recent article that indicates lack of school choice correlates with mental health issues: [Opinion | School Choice: Better Than Prozac](https://www.wsj.com/articles/school-choice-better-than-prozac-11608248279?reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink) (https://www.wsj.com/articles/school-choice-better-than-prozac-11608248279?reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink).

Every parent should have the right to place their children in educational options that **best fit with their values and their children's academic needs**, whether that's a public school or other alternative.

There is no good reason as to why every parent shouldn't be able to utilize this wonderful opportunity for their children. In fact, I'm curious to know why the 3% cap was put there in the first place! IT SHOULDN'T BE THERE. **There is no good reason for our kids and parents as to why there should be a limit on educational choice.** I don't understand why you would put forth such a conscious effort to take away families' educational options. PLEASE put people before politics.

Is the cap about funding for the resident public schools?

If the resident public schools need more funding, then tax me some more. I'd rather have you tax us more so we can continue to exercise our freedom of choosing the best educational options for our children. **Putting a limit on families' educational choice is completely and utterly unfair and tyrannical.**

Virtual Charter Schools are progressive and modern.

The virtual public charter schools are "schooled" in today's COVID-19 style of learning. They've operated in this virtual environment for years now. They've mastered it, which was also evident to us this year. How wonderful for children! So, for you to eliminate this alternative educational option for families - that is thoroughly experienced in this "new world" of teaching - shows how repressive the ridiculous ANY cap is.

Evolve with the times!

We live in a world today in which it's commonplace to telecommute for our jobs where we don't have to live within close proximity of the physical location of our jobs. Why should schools be any different?

For us, our experience has been that the virtual public charter school option is superior over our resident public school. In America - the Land of the Free – ***all families should have the right to choose the best educational option that aligns with their needs and values the best, especially for those children who may be struggling in their resident public schools, and who aren't able to afford private schools.***

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Connie Whelchel