

Dear Senator Dembrow and members of the committee,

RE: opposition to SB 240

I had thought this bill was dead - and then looked and saw that you were receiving testimony in favor of it and felt that an opposing view was important for the record.

We have discovered the importance of in-person learning during these hard pandemic times and I could speak to this, or to the growing power of our schools to provide a broad education that encompasses much beyond the three R's. But, I will speak to only one of the reasons why I believe in-person public schooling is so essential

We have lost the "commons" in our society. We no longer read the same daily newspapers, watch the same TV news, bowl in the same league, cheer at the same sports events, or join the same civic organizations. Of course, none of this was perfect - but we used to have ways that most of us were exposed to shared community experiences, intellectually or physically.

The in-person public school remains our sole "commons". While imperfect, it provides the structure where students from a broad swath of society meet together, learn together, play together, and bring their families into engagement. I hear stories every week from the teachers in my family about unlikely alliances that happen between students: a popular boy becomes friends with a marginalized student with a disability and learns that he is really fun to be with, a Muslim student explains what it is like to fast during Ramadan and gains the respect of her fellow students, parents and community members from diverse backgrounds gather and learn from each other in parent groups such as the PTA and as volunteers in the schools.

We fail to celebrate this aspect of schooling enough. It is part of the heart of public education. Diluting it further by lifting a cap on virtual public schools would be a sore blow to the capacity of

our society to serve and respect all of our people. It would diminish our slow march towards being a true democracy.

Thank you for your service,

Carol Greenough, Ph.D.