

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee:

As a parent of two school age children in Oregon I wish to voice my support of SB 240. My younger son attends our local school district, his needs are being met and he is thriving. For my older son this is not the case. My older son is in 9th grade this year, he has had an IEP since kindergarten. We worked for years to get his educational needs met in our local school district. We had hundreds of meetings, sent literally thousands of emails. We tried everything we could think of including filing a state complaint and pursuing mediation. As we approached middle school we were told that his support needs were extensive and he would likely spend most of his day in a self-contained classroom. He was to be on track for an extended diploma. This is the lowest level diploma option and he would be considered a “non-graduate” per OARs.

We filled as homeschoolers with the ESD for his 6th grade year. Families who file as homeschoolers get no support from anyone: We were on our own. As far as I was aware this was our only alternative to the local school district. It’s not something we chose lightly and even without supports, it was working much better for my son. Partway through the school year I learned about virtual charter schools. We have never looked back.

The Virtual Charter School we use is based in Eastern Oregon but they have a campus near our home where he can attend a weekly “community day”. Pre-covid he also participated in weekly enrichment classes of his choosing such as music, leatherwork and video editing. My son is a public school student. He has all the diploma options he would have in our local district. We maintain an IEP and he receives services such as Speech Therapy as he would in the local district: but he can work at his own pace, with curriculum that we choose with the support of licensed teachers and specialists. He is almost through his 9th grade year and he is on track to receive a Modified Diploma by the time he turns 21. He will be considered a “High School Graduate” at the end of his high school career. This is only possible because of the virtual charter school option. Please support SB 240.

Thank you,
Stephanie Widler
Redmond, OR