

To Whom It May Concern,

Education is of vital importance in our family, and our son's educational journey has been greatly improved by his ability to attend a virtual charter school (Frontier Charter Academy or Oregon). Prior to this, he attended K-3 at our neighborhood school and had increasing struggles as he advanced grades. Our son has ADHD and delayed cognitive processing, which meant that the brick-and-mortar option left him falling way behind. The teachers regularly do not accommodate IEP guidelines asking for limited visual distractions, and the classroom management of some teachers left him feeling overwhelmed and falling behind, barely meeting benchmarks. We removed him from that setting and homeschooled him for all of fourth grade, selecting a virtual charter for fifth grade. What we noticed is that with limited distractions, more written instruction (which allowed him to read and re-read the information), and a staff which actually honored his IEP, he is now thriving. Currently in 8th grade, he's had a 4.0 GPA for the past four years and is in honors courses. This is more than what we could have hoped for in a typical classroom. Virtual charters offer kids like our son an environment where learning may be better supported due to limited distractions, more control of classroom management for the teacher (who can mute mics/or chat to deal with distracting behaviors) and better access for keeping track of their assignments, progress and work.

Overall, our experience of virtual charter schools has been a positive one. Our son wants to keep attending high school in this way because he feels he is able to succeed in his work when he can focus. I believe that virtual charters also help other students, whether or not they are neurodiverse, in having a way to engage in a safe classroom. Bullying was the catalyst for removing our son from brick and mortar (even with 3 years of safety plans), and it is common that non-neurotypical kids are often targets of violence and harassment. This caused our son profound anxiety, anger and sadness. We are so elated to have our happy kiddo back, and he loves being in a school which feels safe and respectful. Many parents of all sorts of kiddos desperately need this sort of option. Not all parents have the resources and background to be able to homeschool. We were fortunate, but so many more families need this option. I do believe that the schools should be working toward accreditation with Cognia or another nationally recognized agency and should be required to meet the same guidelines for graduation as the typical public school.

Thank you for your time in reading this and for your consideration.

Hazel and Joseph Wheeler