

Submitter: Amy Manning
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1552

Dear Senate Committee on Public Education:

I am a parent with two school age children that both attend virtual charter schools. The decisions to remove them from brick and mortar schooling was different for each child - but both were equally important.

My son was in seventh grade when he left. He was previously diagnosed with ADHD and Auditory Processing Disorder. His grades were well below average. He would often come home with a backpack stuffed with homework that he said he did not know how to do. When he did so his homework, he rarely remembered to turn it in. It was impossible for me to help him navigate this complicated system. I had many meetings with all of his teachers to talk about the various ways they could help, but nothing ever changed. He was also struggling with some other children's behavior issues. He was lost.

Now that he is in virtual schooling (9th grade), his grades have improved to mostly A's with a few B's. ALL of his schoolwork is located in one place - on his laptop. I can easily oversee what homework has not been completed, and when there is something he doesn't understand, he can simply schedule an appointment with his teacher to go over it - or I am here to help him. And since his classes are all virtual, he isn't distracted by all the behavior issues that are so rampant in in-person schooling.

My daughter was in 3rd grade when she left. She is now in 5th. She has cerebral palsy and for safety reasons, requires help moving through the school. To make a long story short, the "help" that the school provided was inadequate and unsafe and the staff refused to communicate about how to solve the issues. She was also behind academically, and it was very difficult to help her when I was unsure what it was that she did not know. She also came home with a backpack of homework that she didn't know how to do (the staff even conceded that the homework was often inappropriate for her).

Now that she is in online school, I know exactly what she is working on and what I can do to help her. And the access issues here at home are non-existent. I don't have to worry that there is no one there to help her if the building catches on fire or if there is an earthquake. Her grades have improved from 1's and 2's to all 3's.

In addition:

-Having both children in virtual schooling has allowed us to completely avoid covid exposures, along with all the other viruses that usually circulate through schools. My kids rarely miss their scheduled classes, and if they do, they are recorded and can watch them at a later time!

-We are located in a rural area, where the bus stops are located on unsafe roads with very little shoulder and have incredibly long bus routes (requiring an unnaturally early wake-up time), so I chose to drive them to school. I spent three hours a day shuffling them back and forth. Being in a virtual school allows us to completely avoid emitting more greenhouse gasses and we now get to spend that time doing something other than sitting in a car.

-In-person schools are where many kids are able to access drugs and experience cigarettes. When I was a child, most of the kids I know smoked cigarettes. I personally was exposed to alcohol, marijuana, LSD, and psychedelic mushrooms ON school campus. Virtual schooling completely avoids these problems.

-In-person schools are troubled by bullying, violence, and even risk the possibility of being shot to death. Again, virtual schooling completely avoids these problems.

There are so many reasons why school choice is important. These are just a few.

Thank you,
Amy Manning