

Submitter: Kelli Johnson  
On Behalf Of: K12 Virtual Learning  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: HB3204

Hello,

My name is Kelli Johnson and I reside in Portland, Oregon. I would like to first begin by thanking the Education Committee Chair and the members of the committee for the opportunity to voice my support for the House Bill 3204 A. This is especially important to me as I do have a child who is enrolled in a virtual public school. My daughter is 13 years old and she was born with a blood disease called Sickle Cell Anemia. Her blood cells are shaped like the letter C instead of the normal circled shaped blood cells that are found in normal human beings. Because the blood cells are C shaped, they can and do get caught on one another and when this happens, extreme pain occurs as blood flow is now limited/ restricted and not going to all the organs and places it needs to go for healthy functioning. These "pain crisis" episodes can take place at any time, any moment without warning and often times lasts a range between minutes to weeks and the result can lead her in the hospital for many days on extreme pain control. My daughter attended a public school and while she excelled in those schools with good grades, she would suffer from normal illnesses and viruses that most kids could recover from in less than 2 weeks, it would take my daughter at least a month and maybe even more to fully recover. I often worried when the seasons Fall and Winter came especially for these reasons of dreading the normal viruses and colds one can catch, with a weakened immune system it was almost a guaranteed no escape from it. Fast forward, the Covid Pandemic occurred and everyone in school was forced to do online school. This was a big adjustment but what I found is for the first time in 11 years, when Fall/Winter came, my daughter was not sick! The only difference was she was not surrounded by many other children and staff. I couldn't believe it! So when schools started opening back up again for in person, I was fearful to send her back afraid she would catch Covid and I kept her home. Sending her back to face to face school was not an option for my family we just could not take that risk. We didn't believe her body could recover from such deadly virus. That year I kept her home and I taught her from home what I thought she needed to know but quickly I knew I needed a better plan for the following year as I did not want her to fall behind. I was stressed thinking my only option was to send her to face to face school until I seen a commercial advertising public free virtual school and the fact is this virtual school is a proven, established program which included state certified teachers and curriculum. I did not hesitate to sign her up and I have be extremely grateful she was accepted. Of course I worried at first about the lack of social skills decreasing but it still wasn't worth the risk of going back to face to face. My daughter is thriving in her virtual school, she is an all A student and have been since she joined learning how to manage her grades and schooling independently alongside with me as her learning coach and I see they still

have many great in person opportunities for socializing and I can't thank God enough for the virtual school option even being available. It is literally the best thing for our family. Her hospital stays and pain crisis has decreased tremendously it is unbelievable! The best part is my daughter absolutely love all her teachers and they are so supportive of her learning and helping her reach her milestones. The communication between staff and parents and children are efficient, clear we all understand what is going on and when and I get weekly updates of her progress. I feel more involved in her school now than ever before. I urge the members of the Education Committee to pass the House Bill 3024 A so more families have access to virtual learning if that is an option that works best for them, or in my case, this option possibly saved my daughter's life by reducing the number of pain episodes and sickness.