

Greetings,

My name is Steven Hull. I am a single parent living in the city of Franklin in Warren County. My daughter is Marian "Maggie" Hull. This just completed school year was Maggie's senior year of high school. Had it not been for GOVS, their caring staff and all of the exceptional organizations that work in conjunction with GOVS, my daughter would not have finished high school and would probably not be alive today. This is not exaggeration.

Tuesday, May 28th, 2019 Maggie made her fourth suicide attempt. She carried a heavy burden. She had been abandoned at age 4 by her mother and had struggled with depression during her entire high school experience. Additionally, she was bullied by other students and stalked by an ex-boyfriend. Finally, her paternal grandfather was in the end stages of Alzheimer's disease; he died later that same week. Maggie spent her entire summer in three different hospitals. When she returned to Franklin High School in late August our situation did not improve.

During the first three years of high school Maggie was an honors student, testimony to her determination. The start of the final year was rough. She had commendable support from her teachers, but some of the other students were brutal. I was worried that not only would she not finish high school, but that another suicide attempt would be likely and final. Her therapist recommended transitioning Maggie to GOVS.

I knew nothing about GOVS; I doubt that anything even remotely like it existed when I was in school. GOVS provided Maggie with the structure and quiet she needed to get back on track. As a single parent I depended on the friendly, professional assistance they provided. In the process I learned that in our circle of friends two other children were also enrolled in GOVS.

This program makes a difference. It provides a path to graduation for kids who would otherwise probably never finish school. Education is crucial. With education comes hope. Maggie is taking three classes at Sinclair Community College during this summer session. Please, help keep GOVS alive. I will gladly help in any way I can.

Thank you for your assistance with this funding initiative,

Steven Brent Hull  
Franklin, OH 45005

---

Dear Senator Brenner:

I contact you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. Traditional brick and mortar schools do not work for many students. Consequently, DOPR e-schools are the last line of defense for many students. Some students have been bullied; some students are teen parents; some students work to help

support their families; some students have health or pregnancy issues; some students have been released from their home schools for behavioral issues and some are leaving a home school situation. The reasons are many and varied. The point is: there is a definite need for the DOPR e-schools! Without this type of school, GOVS (Greater Ohio Virtual School) specifically, thousands of students would not have received their diplomas since the inception of GOVS in 2002. This past spring, GOVS graduated 169 students. This number has increased yearly. GOVS is providing a critical service for these students who would, otherwise, have “fallen through the cracks”. With your committee’s approval for financial support, schools such as the Greater Ohio Virtual School will continue to offer these vulnerable students the opportunity to achieve a high school diploma with the opportunity to attain better employment upon graduation. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Pamela Helsinger  
Greater Ohio Virtual School  
Lebanon, Ohio

---

Senator Brenner:

My name is Erin Edgren and I am contacting you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded.

I have been employed as an Intervention Specialist with the Greater Ohio Virtual School since 2013. The sentiment of this letter does not even come close to expressing the pride that I feel by being a part of the staff at the GOVS. Each member of the administration, teaching, and office staff is fully committed to meeting students where they are without judgement and getting them across the finish line of earning a diploma. There is not enough room in this letter to tell all of the stories about actions that my co-workers have taken in the name of student well being and success.

The reasons that students come to GOVS are different for each family. In my seven years with GOVS, no two students’ circumstances have ever been the same. With a combined effort in sensitivity, a focus on relationships, and a demand for excellence, students who believe that they were never good in school, for the first time, have hope. It pains me greatly to think about all of the other non-traditional, at risk students who may not have the same opportunity to experience this change in mindset: from victim to achiever. A student's experience at GOVS is about so much more than just earning credits. We teach students not only curricular content, but also how to see themselves in a different way - problem solver. From my perspective, GOVS is the best opportunity some students have at breaking the cycle of generational poverty.

The past seven years have been the most rewarding of my teaching career. It has been the joy of both my professional and personal life to be able to help students and families who were otherwise written off, marginalized, and left behind find a way to thrive in the educational setting that GOVS has to offer. Watching students have the chance to overcome their challenges, build their confidence, and achieve their goal of earning a high school diploma never gets old. I cry

every year at our graduation knowing what we accomplished together. Many students and parents tell me that earning a diploma would never have happened had it not been for GOVS. I believe them.

I implore you to do everything in your power to pass the legislation needed to keep not only the Greater Ohio Virtual School open, but the other dropout prevention/credit recovery E-schools in Ohio. I assure you, we provide a desperately needed service to hundreds of students and families, many who have all but given up. We have always embraced the less than ideal circumstances, welcomed the challenges, and employed creativity to solve problems. We hope, with your help, we will be able to continue to do so. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Edgren

---

Senators;

Please allow me to address you concerning the funding issues facing E-Schools that serve students at risk. I have taught at GOVS for about 15 years, following a long career in traditional schools. As we constantly say, not every student flourishes in the same environment. The students served by schools like GOVS are, for a variety of reasons, often not well served in other school environments. At our school, we attempt to meet students where they are when they come to us, and to help them achieve the maximum possible success. This year, 170 students met Ohio Graduation requirements and graduated from our school. Those students' lives will be forever different because they earned that high school diploma.

Because we work with 75 different school districts, we have been able to assist them in providing the best possible chance for their students to be successful, and have been able to provide resources that are not available in the traditional setting.

I ask that, as you consider funding options for schools like ours, you consider the students we serve. Look at the ways in which we have helped them achieve their goals, and reach more of their potential. Think about the different needs of students and recognize that schools like ours can meet needs in some students that other learning situations cannot. Please find a way to fund an alternative like ours that means so much to the students we are working so very hard to serve.

Respectfully,

Sherri L. Swiger  
Teacher, Greater Ohio Virtual School

---

Thomas M. Baratko  
305 Foliage Lane  
Springboro, Ohio 45066

Dear Honorable Senators: Huffman, Obhof, Lehner, Brenner, Fedor, Dolan.

I am writing a 12th hour letter in support of all the DOPR schools in the State. Yes, I am working at the Greater Ohio Virtual School, and have since its inception! I approach my 50th year in Education, having served in Districts as large as Cleveland Public and small as Pandora-Gilboa, and in the roles of teacher (HPE, Biology, Special Education), Administrator (Athletic Director, Special Education Director, Asst. Principal, High School Principal). I only mention this as a reference to my Educational Experience.

This plea is not about me nor any individual School. It is about the individual student who cannot for any one of a myriad of circumstances get their Education in a traditional brick and mortar setting. I have seen first hand the successes that have derived from schools such as ours. Honestly, words cannot describe the emotions that I have seen, and experienced at Greater Ohio Virtual School Graduations.

You have all the data, and it is compelling. DOPR schools are necessary, and a vital link to so many students as they prepare to transition from High School to their next phase in life, whether that be the Workforce, Continuing their Education, Serving their Country, or a combination of these.

I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration in this extremely important issue. Ohio has shown its compassion for its citizens in these times of crisis and uncertainty. I am hoping we can do it again!

Sincerely,

Tom Baratko

---

Senator Andy Brenner,

My name is Michelle Dickstein and I am contacting you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded.

I have been contracted as the School Psychologist with the Greater Ohio Virtual School (GOVS) for 6-years through the Warren County Educational Service Center (WCESC). Through my years with GOVS I have seen the most incredible things; some make your heart smile while some make you cry and hold your own children closer.

The students enroll in a virtual school for many reasons. More often than not, these students are not the bright and shiny pupils in a classroom. They are the forgotten students. They are the children that have struggled in school and act out. They are the students that have been physically and emotionally abused at home and no longer feel they can trust anyone. They have been withdrawn and enrolled in more schools than they can keep track of which has created gaps in their education. They are the medically fragile children that have been in and out of hospitals and cannot attend traditional school. To no fault of their own these students deserve a chance to earn their diploma and make a difference. These students did not start their first day of

kindergarten hating school or worried they would not graduate. But something got in the way of making it easy for them to succeed.

All educators are special people, but GOVS has the best bunch of hardworking teachers in any school I have ever served. The teachers at GOVS are able to rebuild trust with their students and families that have been unsuccessful in their former schools. The teachers are patient and kind while encouraging the students that they can achieve. Our non traditional students require non traditional teaching which might include working odd hours to meet the students full-time work schedule needs. The students often do not have support at home and the teachers provide stability that the students have never experienced. I have always told people one of the many things GOVS does well is thinking out of the box to meet the students needs.

During this time of so much uncertainty and loss, the at-risk students need support more now than ever before. Please help these students succeed and become a contributing member of their community. Every student counts.

Michelle Dickstein, ME.d., C.A.G.S.,  
School Psychologist for Warren County ESC  
Serving The Greater Ohio Virtual School  
513-695-2900 ext. 3077

---

Dear Senator Brenner,

My name is Joanna Manchak. I am one of the school counselors for the Greater Ohio Virtual School. I would like to support the proposal for a funding fix for the DORP E-Schools. I have seen first hand, the successes our school has had in graduating so many students that may not have otherwise done so.

As an at risk school, these kids truly are at a disadvantage of being a success. A school like ours has given them the CHANCE. This chance has statistically resulted in successes. This year we had 169 grads. These kids life circumstances told them they couldn't do it. With the help of GOVS, they did. These graduates are made up of students with babies, students working full time to support their family, students with medical problems making it impossible to attend a traditional district without truancy problems, English Language Learners, students who gave up, students with mental health issues and many other situations.

Where are these students to go if something is to happen to GOVS? Back to the district? They are not equipped to handle these kids. To another online school? They will fall through the cracks because they can find any excuse and believe me, they have good reason to want to give up. For many, they would live in truancy and in the cracks. A school like ours fills those cracks and gives these students a CHANCE and in turn SUCCESS.

I have worked in a juvenile treatment program working with juvenile delinquents. I had many frustrations there as I saw much recidivism in the students and the community. Being with GOVS has given me the opportunity to help these students before their risk factors take them there. How can we end a school and many schools like mine that help these students. Where are they to go?

Thank you for listening to my thoughts about these students we have all fought so hard for.

Joanna Manchak, LPSC  
School Counselor  
513-695-2900, ex 3064  
[joanna.manchak@warrencountyesc.com](mailto:joanna.manchak@warrencountyesc.com)  
[www.mygovs.com](http://www.mygovs.com)



---

Senator Andy Brenner,

I am a 37 year veteran public school teacher who has for the past 2 years also taught part time at Greater Ohio Virtual School (GOVS). My hope was that the opportunity to instruct virtually would allow me to have a better understanding of the role online schools play in the education system and help me to hone new strategies to reach those students who weren't finding success in traditional brick and mortar schools. To be completely honest, initially I thought that the majority of students who transferred to an online school did so to avoid disciplinary struggles that they were experiencing and to avoid doing the expected work. It did not take long for me to realize, however, the invaluable service that online schools were providing! Let me share a few brief descriptions to capture some of my students who benefited from this opportunity to attend an online school.....

**Student A:** He was adopted at a young age, but his parents moved out of state when he was 18. He still wanted to earn his high school diploma, but would now have to do that in a non-traditional way. Although he had some outside resources for support, he needed to work full-time to afford an apartment and public transportation. Schooling was something that he would need to fit in around his work schedule, but he successfully balanced all that was on his plate and graduated from GOVS with aspirations of attending college!

**Student B:** Having already earned 28 of the required 18 End of Course Exam points, Student B was a very bright person. However, she had autism, and her behaviors often left her feeling bullied and ridiculed at her brick and mortar school. She was all set to drop out when she turned 18 in December, but her mom convinced her to give GOVS a try. This was such a beautiful fit

for her! Without the verbal abuse, Student B flourished at GOVS and graduated near the top of her class!

**Student C:** This young man finished his 8th grade year with an adjusted schedule, which was put in place after he had an altercation in his brick and mortar school. As a high-functioning student with autism, he had strong intellectual skills, but often lacked the social skills and verbal tact to effectively resolve differences. His family chose to enroll him at GOVS where appropriate interaction skills could still be addressed, but he would have the opportunity to complete rigorous courses at his pace ---- a pace that allowed him to complete his freshman and half of his sophomore courses (all with A's and B's) in the span of one year!

Even more important than my opinion, however, are the feelings of some of the parents of my students. Let me share some of their text comments from this year....

**May 26, 2020**

Yay!!! I knew he could do it! Thanks you for all the help you gave him and encouragement! I am so Happy for him! ☒👤🙏

**May 27, 2020**

Thank you so much for the encouragement you have given all of us through this trying year!! We can not thank you enough!!!!

You have been a blessing to us! Have a great summer as well!!

**May 28, 2020**

Thank you Tammy, all of your encouragement and support is what made this moment happen.

We really appreciate you and all that you have done for her. You are such a blessing.

**May 29, 2020**

.....You are very good at what you do and it is obvious how much you enjoy your job. You're so passionate and helping these kids it is so amazing. We are very fortunate to have had you working with XXXXXX these last couple of years. XXXXXX went from one extreme of bullies and lack of support to the other extreme of full support. It changed her life forever and it made such a difference in her that it repaired our family where it was broken for a time while she was suffering at the other school.

**June 3, 2020**

Everything went fantastic at GOVS today. I don't remember when I saw XXXXXX so happy. We owe it all to you and the staff there at GOVS for making this dream turn into a reality. Thank you so much. Have a great summer Tammy, you deserve it!

**June 9, 2020**

Okay great thanks. We r excited to watch too! Thank you for all you did for XXXX this year to help motivate him :)

The purpose of my plea to you with this message isn't to keep me from losing a job. I still have a full-time teaching position with my brick and mortar school. Rather, the purpose of this message is to be a voice for all those students who depend upon online schooling to meet their educational needs. Traditional schools work for most students, but not all. It breaks my heart to think about where some of the students I mentioned above would be if online education hadn't been an option. I sincerely hope that as you make important decisions regarding the funding of online schools, you will consider the needs of all students, especially those who are struggling in traditional schools.

I contact you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. As you are well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has created hardships and generated uncertainty for all schools operating in Ohio. This is especially true for those DOPR schools, which educate Ohio's most vulnerable students. Unfortunately, uncertainty around funding has threatened the survival of these schools, which will likely lead to many at-risk students being left without the resources and services they need to succeed.

Like other online schools, DOPR E-schools are funded based on student participation, which requires extensive and burdensome tracking of student engagement. Basing funding on student participation or "seat time" poses a specific challenge for DOPR E-schools, which serve a population of predominately at-risk students. Often, despite a school's best efforts, it can take time for a vulnerable student to actively engage in learning opportunities. Unfortunately, under Ohio's current funding model, those efforts and services go unfunded, simply because the student did not participate. DOPR schools often enroll students with a long history of truancy issues and challenges that made them unsuccessful in a traditional environment. Unless a student has 100% attendance immediately, an E-school will not receive full funding. In other words, funding DOPR E-schools based on seat-time unfairly punishes DOPR schools for the students they enroll and try so desperately to help.

Through working with DOPR E-schools there has been a proposal developed creating a three-tiered funding system that would provide schools with the financial support necessary to ensure students receive the initial support needed to succeed, continue to fund DOPR E-schools based on participation, and reward student achievement. This proposal funding model is not aimed at increasing the total amount of funding DOPR E-schools receive per student, but instead merely provides additional pathways to earn full funding for a student.

The first funding tier would provide a one-time payment of \$1,750 for the student's initial enrollment in the school. This would ensure the school is able to cover initial expenses such as the computer, internet access, counselling and other services necessary to get students re-engaged in educational activities. The second tier would continue to use student participation as a measure. This is important because schools have already made significant investments in

student monitoring technology and software. Student tracking is also important to ensure accountability and can provide useful information to the state on student engagement. The final tier would offer funding for achievement or completion of credits. Earning a diploma should be the ultimate goal of any school in Ohio. This is certainly the case for DOPR schools; however, the current funding model penalizes these schools when a student earns credits towards graduating, but does not participate in the full 920 hours. It is important to note, that funding would be capped at the current formula amount or (\$6,020 per student) plus any categorical

funds for students who receive special education or career-technical education services (as is in current law).

For anyone concerned about the financial impact this proposal will have, I urge them to consider the financial impact of having DOPR E-schools close. According to a recent E-school funding report issued by ODE, DOPR E-schools serve 7,686 students (the report shows a total of 37,733 students being served by E-schools). That same report (Table 3) compares the headcount of students at each E-school and the FTE that each E-school generated during the course of the year. You will see that general education E-schools were funded at 66.7% of total student headcount. DOPR E-schools on the other hand received funding at 49.7% of total student headcount.<sup>1</sup> If DOPR E-schools are forced to close over funding constraints, what will happen to their students? The students will likely either return to the traditional school setting and likely continue to struggle to participate (while the traditional school will receive full funding for the student) or the student will drop out of school completely, and likely cost the state more in the long run.

The need for this funding change is more necessary now than ever before, considering schools are being forced to adapt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional schools that move to an online learning model for the upcoming school year likely won't need to adhere to the student monitoring requirements that E-schools are currently forced to meet. Additionally, traditional schools' funding also likely won't be tied to seat-time as an E-school's funding currently is. The pandemic has also impacted student engagement, as things like testing requirements have been lifted. While foregoing certain testing requirements was likely the correct policy given the state of the crisis, DOPR E-schools were previously able count, and funded for, the time a student spent testing. With testing requirements lifted, those hours will likely go unaccounted, and therefore, unfunded.

DOPR E-schools are not immune to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. These schools have worked to continue serving their students during the crisis and face the same uncertainty as any other school entering the upcoming school year. By adopting this revised funding model for DOPR E-schools we can ensure that they receive the funding necessary to continue serving Ohio's most at-risk populations.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration!

Tammy Broughton  
GOVS Intervention Specialist  
513/525-8353



---

Dear Sir,

I would like to ask you to help with the fix for the funding of schools like Greater Ohio Virtual School. Three of our seven children have attended and have been very blessed by their quality and style of education.

Our daughter attended Greater Ohio Virtual School for her last year of high school when we transferred from Minnesota to Ohio. She really appreciated the opportunity. She entered for the scholarship and won. She used that money for going to college.

Our fourth son loved electronics and fed on the way that he was allowed to use computers to do his school online. The tutors made a big difference for him and he ended up attending Greater Ohio Virtual School in the mornings and going to Warren County Career Center in the afternoons for IT.

Our fifth son hated public school, but this was a way that he was able to finish his education and get a diploma. We could not have afforded the majority of online private programs. Without this option we would have had to try and push him on through public school where he would have probably ended up dropping out and just trying to get his GED. We are so grateful he has his high school diploma. He really enjoyed this learning style and was motivated to complete it. It felt doable to him.

We are so grateful for the services of Greater Ohio Virtual School. The staff and leadership are excellent role models. Our last daughter is attending Lebanon Junior High School and although we hope this will continue to be a great option for her, we hope that Greater Ohio Virtual School will remain open as a way to help many more students. It is very nice when our tax dollars pay for the type of learning our child needs.

Sincerely,  
Chrissy Wieters  
Lebanon Ohio

---

Hello! I would like to take a moment of your time to talk to you about a great partnership that our high school has developed with GOVS (Greater Ohio Virtual School) online school.

During my first year as a counselor at Princeton, my assistant principal, Mr. Chuck Soule, and I realized we had some students who were struggling with the typical high school setting. One might assume these students were all credit deficient and struggled with behavior, and that was the case with some, but not all. Some of our students work long hours to help support their families. We have some who are young mothers who have no one to support them in

parenting. Others have social anxiety. These are just a few examples. We needed to find a way to help these students continue in their educational journey, so they could earn their diplomas.

Chuck and I had the opportunity to meet Shawn Lenney and Brian Barot in the fall of 2016. They told us about their program and all they do to support students in ways other online schools don't. They were offering free tutoring to every student. GOVS provided flexible hours for students to work outside the normal school day to complete their work. In addition to the free individual tutoring, group sessions were being held at GOVS. What Shawn and Brian were proposing to us was much more than any other online school I had worked with in the past, so we presented the information to our principal, and our partnership was born. I went from advising students and parents against any online school to openly working with families on the chance GOVS could provide for their child.

GOVS has gone the extra mile to help students every step of the way. Transportation is an issue for many of our families, so GOVS arranged to do orientation at our building, so our parents and students wouldn't have to drive the distance to GOVS physical facility. To help even more, we arranged for GOVS students, both from Princeton and those who lived close by, to take state tests at our building. Getting to tutoring sessions was a challenge for our students, so they reached out and found locations closer to our students. Shawn, Brian and their team have considered all of the needs their students present and have molded their program to meet students where they are.

Chuck and I both feel very fortunate to have developed the relationship with GOVS, as it has helped many of our students over the last 4 years. In fact, because of our relationship, I was able to share this information with Hamilton High School, and they began to work with GOVS as well. If a solution isn't found to keep GOVS running, **students lose** - not just Princeton students, but students from all over Hamilton, Butler and Warren Counties.

Thank you for the support you are offering to help students succeed! Please do what's best for our students and keep GOVS open!

--

Chrissy Grabel  
Princeton High School  
Senior Counselor  
513-864-1801

School Code: 361067  
Naviance Link: <https://student.naviance.com/princetonhs>  
Twitter Account: @PHS\_counselors5

--

Chrissy Grabel  
Princeton High School

Junior Counselor  
513-864-1801

School Code: 361067  
Naviance Link: <https://student.naviance.com/princetonhs>  
Twitter Account: @PHS\_counselors5

---

I just received an email from a Warren County Ohio GOVS teacher stating my sons home school my be shut down due to funding issues. I do hope this issue can be resolved, as this school has helped him more than any public school.

My son will be a senior this coming academic year and would be totally traumatic for him to go back to public school for his final year.

Please reconsider shutting of the GOVS as they all are wonderful and caring teachers and staff.

Mitzi French  
Franklin, Ohio 45005

---

Good evening,

I have recently learned that Greater Ohio Virtual School is facing funding issues which could lead to their closing. I would ask you to consider doing what you can to keep this school operational. My son has always struggled with learning and still does. GOVS has provided him to learn at his pace and in his way. If he has to return to regular school he will most definitely give up and drop out. I know there is no way he can pass a GED exam. This is for his future and many others like him. Please help us keep this opportunity for him and others who struggle with their education.

Thank you for time.

Suzy Conover

---

June 23, 2020,

Dear Senator, Andy Brenner

I am writing to you concerning news that I have received about the possible closing of The Greater Ohio Virtual School, better known to students as GOVS. I am a parent of a GOVS graduate. My son, Brady Gillum, graduated this year from GOVS. I am going to briefly tell you his story in hopes that you will see why a school such as GOVS is a necessary educational institute.

Brady was diagnosed with ADHD, ASD, and Tourette's Syndrome at the age of 5. He went to public school until the eighth grade. Brady was bullied at school and we fought this on weekly, sometimes daily basis. He was truant as he got older due to refusing to go to school. We are a 2 parent household where both parents had to work. I could not quit my job and neither could his father. I heard of GOVS and contacted them. It seemed to be a quick solution at least for the rest of his eighth grade year. Brady was making Ds and Fs in his classes at school, despite being a highly intelligent boy. Once he started GOVS and was able to work on his own time and pace he started making As and Bs. I quickly realized that this is something that WORKS for my child!

Brady was also in that time diagnosed with social phobia. A child with social phobia has great difficulty being in any situation with a lot of people, whether it is school, church, Walmart, or sometimes even a doctor's office. GOVS was a complete lifesaver for my child. GOVS offers a very large variety of classes that some schools are unable to offer, such as "Aviation Science" or "History of Rock and Roll". The GOVS guidance counselors and principal are amazing and will work with you to make sure that your child is getting the best education. The staff of teachers that GOVS has are very qualified and are always available by email and sometimes phone. GOVS offers tutoring in person and through Google Chat. We took advantage of this for math several times.

My son graduated from High School with very good grades, mostly A's. It was not always easy. He worked very hard. Some classes he had were very difficult. These are not classes that are "dumbed down" because they were online. We were not sure if he would make it through until we found GOVS. I am so proud of him and I have a very special place in my heart for the GOVS staff.

Please consider this as you move forward with you decision to fund, or not to fund schools such as GOVS. I am aware that many schools may not be "up to par" with their educational offerings, however, this is not true of GOVS. Without this school there will be many kids that just drop out or give up. They will have no other option. Not all parents are qualified to homeschool their kids and not all parents have the ability to quit a job to stay home and do this.

Thank you for your time. I appreciate the work you are doing in our government.

Sincerely,

Kelley Gillum

Proud mother of a GOVS graduate

---

Hello,

I am writing to ask you to please find a way to fund GOVS for next year. This online school option is so very important to students who, for whatever reason, cannot attend a brick and mortar school. Basing their funding on this past year is just detrimental to the students who will be affected by closing them down. Please find a way to keep them open.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mary Johnson

Springboro OH 45066

---

Good morning to you all,

I am writing to you this morning to ask that you find a funding solution for the Greater Ohio Virtual School. This school saved my son's future.

My son Jacob just graduated earlier this month. Now that may not sound like any big deal, but his story certainly is. Jacob attended Franklin City Schools since kindergarten. He was in the gifted program, he played sports all year round. He was a normal, healthy, growing kid. His freshman year of HS, he developed clostridium Difficile (c.diff.). It is a severe bacterial infection of his gastro-intestinal system caused by antibiotics. He was 14 years old. C.diff. is nearly antibiotic resistant. There are only two antibiotics in the world strong enough to kill it. They put Jacob on a 14 day round of the least strongest of the two choices. This and the C,diff. made him severely ill. Stomach pains and cramping, nausea and vomiting, and eventually depression. He got a little better but never was quite himself, always in pain, not able to eat because food hurt his belly. Had to quit sports because he was in too much pain and too exhausted to go to practice. The first time he got it was November 2017.

He got C.diff. again in April 2018 because the antibiotic he took to treat it only half killed the spores but then they grew and came back with a vengeance. Again, they gave him a stronger dose of the least strongest of the two choices of antibiotics. Again, he was debilitated by pain. Unable to go to school for months after each infection. Trying home school direction from the HS staff (basically the school sent his work home or online but appointed no help or tutors). Thankfully he is a very intelligent boy or he would have failed the ninth grade. This time he sunk deeper in depression. He was too sick to do anything, and C.diff. is highly contagious. He wasn't able to hang out with his friends, play sports, or go to school. He sunk deeper into a depression and eventually tried to kill himself.

He got C.diff. a third time in February 2019. This time the doctors put him on the strongest antibiotic there is to kill C.diff. It again, made him extremely sick. He couldn't go to school and did home school from the HS, again with no help or tutors. He barely passed the tenth grade. By the time his junior year had started, the C.diff. infections had left lasting damage to his digestive system. He has constant abdominal pain and has not grown, not one inch, not five pounds, since his first infection almost two years earlier. At a time when a growing boy should be growing. We have been to five GI doctors, a chiropractor, and a naturopath, trying to heal his body from the lasting effects. His Junior year he struggled to get to school. The doctors just say it is IBS, but they don't know the pain he is in and how hard it is for a child to function every day with pain, and not want to just sleep through it. As his mother, I know it is more than just IBS. The school referred us to a truant officer. I was NOT going to force my child to get up early and go to school every day with the pain. We were referred to GOVS by the Warren County Career Center (he was attending there his junior year in the nursing program, which he had to quit). We switched over and he was able to sleep through the pain and log on and complete his assignments at the

best time available for him. He wouldn't have made it in HS any longer. We both would have been in court and facing consequences for something we couldn't help.

By the time Jacob had started with GOVS, he was ahead academically. Like I said, he was in the gifted program his whole life, and took a lot of his HS courses early in Jr High, when he was still healthy. Because of this, not only was he able to finish HS with help from GOVS teachers and staff, but he was able to even graduate a year early. This gave him an obtainable goal, and gave him something to work towards and look forward to again. And with everything he has been through, he did it! Without GOVS he'd probably be sitting in juvenile detention and waiting until his 18th birthday so he could drop out of school.

He still has not grown and he will be 18 in a few months. He still lives with daily pain and fatigue. We accrued, after insurance payments, over \$20,000 in medical debt. We will be seeing our sixth GI doctor in a few weeks. We will keep going until we find how to fix the pain, so he can go on to lead a normal life.

Again, without GOVS my son would probably not even graduated HS. GOVS helped him when the city school system failed him. GOVS is so important! Please help get the funding they need to go on helping other kids like my son Jacob. We owe them so much!

Thank you all for your time,  
Joanne Moharter  
Miamisburg, OH 45342

---

> Dear Senator Brenner,

>

> This is my son Adam. He is a rising high school senior at Greater Ohio Virtual School (GOVS). I am writing because I recently learned that GOVS is in danger of being closed due to lack of funding.

>

> GOVS is primarily known as a dropout prevention school, and while that is true for some, I wanted you to hear Adam's story.

>

> Until three years ago, Adam excelled and thrived in many areas. He had made the varsity golf team, he was a member of the National Jr. Honor Society, an elementary tutor, a volunteer at Otterbein Nursing Home, and he organized a 5k race that raised almost \$5,000 for our local food pantry. He was happy and he had a terrific group of friends.

>

> Then came the anxiety and panic attacks. There was no warning, no trigger. Suddenly Adam wasn't able to go into his school building. He wasn't able to go to a restaurant or a crowded football game. He wasn't able to sit at the barbershop to get a haircut or go to the orthodontist to have his braces removed. One day, Adam was dancing around with teammates on our local street corner, to attract people to a golf team fundraiser...and literally the very next morning, he was paralyzed by panic and anxiety. It has been a long road since then.

>

> Every morning for three months, Adam went to his school (Springboro HS). Most days he couldn't get out of my car. Some days he made it to the guidance office, where he would do his assignments alone. Never was he able to return to his classrooms. Those were dark, difficult months.

>

> It became evident that Adam's mental health situation would not improve quickly, so we needed an alternative for his schooling. The assistant principal at Springboro HS recommended GOVS, so we withdrew Adam from SHS and enrolled him at GOVS midway through his freshman year.

>

> GOVS has been an answered prayer for our family. Adam has received a top-notch education, and while online school presents a unique set of challenges, it has given Adam the flexibility to pursue counseling and medical help for his mental health challenges while still tackling an advanced/honors track and maintaining straight A's. His curriculum last year included advanced physics and calculus courses, as well as electives like music appreciation.

>

> The GOVS staff has been outstanding. Adam has regular contact with his teachers. They are responsive and helpful whenever he encounters a problem or has a question. The guidance counseling staff has been very attentive to his needs as a college-bound student, offering recommendations tailored for his specific interests and strengths. They accommodated Adam's unique medical needs during group testing (a major source of anxiety for him). One teacher in particular has made an extraordinary effort to get to know Adam- which can be a real challenge in a virtual learning environment. He has been supported and encouraged every step of the way. They have given Adam the tools to finish high school with honors and pursue a college education.

>

> This was not the high school experience Adam wanted. It's not the experience we wanted FOR him. But there isn't a single day that we don't thank our lucky stars that GOVS was there to meet our unique needs when we desperately needed an alternative to a brick and mortar school. They have met, and exceeded, every one of our needs and expectations.

>

> GOVS may seem to outsiders like a patchwork of misfits, and in some ways, maybe it is. But they serve a population of students that might otherwise fall through the cracks, for a variety of reasons. And they do it so well. The GOVS staff is passionate about helping their at-risk student population succeed, in and out of the classroom.

>

> Please, please keep GOVS open.

>

> Sincerely,

>

> Jennifer Banford

>

> Springboro, OH 45066

> [jenbanford@yahoo.com](mailto:jenbanford@yahoo.com)

>

---

Good Evening,

As a mother and a taxpayer, I'm extremely disappointed to learn about the possible closure of the Greater Ohio Virtual School. Without this option for my son in the Fall, I'm not sure how he will be able to graduate. He suffers from severe anxiety and depression and has been successfully doing online school for the past six years. He will be a Junior and by the way, received straight A's last year while enrolled at GOVS.

Here is some background information on our story. Gaven, my son, started having severe issues during elementary school. Panic attacks, "meltdowns" as we called them, and it was (and still is) a struggle for him just to leave the house. He attended a brick and mortar elementary school at this time. Thankfully, the principal there had a background in special needs and was understanding to our situation. This all changed when Gaven went to the middle school in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The principal there was not understanding and sadly the only "help" that is available for children diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder is a 504 plan, which by the way I have learned first hand is a complete waste of time. (This may be something you also want to look into!!). Things like the crowded hallways between classes, the sudden push for independence by all the teachers at the middle school, and even remembering which classes he needed to bring his books home for so he could complete his homework were all too overwhelming for him. I won't go into detail but **BULLYING** is a **SEVERE** problem in schools (another issue you may want to spend some time talking about) and I don't feel he will be **SAFE** going to a brick and mortar high school with his severe condition. Every day was torture for him for those few months he attended middle school at the brick and mortar school. It has also been our experience that brick and mortar schools like their students to be "cut from the same mold" so to say. Anyone that doesn't fit this mold is not treated well by the other students and even at times by the staff. **He needs and deserves a safe space to concentrate and learn, free from distractions, BULLYING, and overstimulation. Bottom line, he WILL NOT be successful trying to complete high school in any situation other than online learning and GOVS is able to provide him with everything he needs to accomplish this. Gaven may never be able to live on his own, get his driver's license, or even hold a "regular" job. Please do not take away his right to earn a high school diploma as well!**

Now I will go into why GOVS is the school for Gaven. Over the years, we have tried many online schools. The VLA is by far the best curriculum geared towards children who need stability and a routine. They wake up each morning knowing what to expect and each lesson is similar while still introducing new topics. I especially love that each lesson incorporates a review of previous ones to keep their skills sharp. He **EXCELS** with this curriculum. Last year was his first year at GOVS. He had been enrolled into the VLA through open enrollment before and we were told (with no notice) last year that this wouldn't be an option anymore. I frantically tried to find him a new school that would meet his needs and thankfully, I found GOVS. The teachers have always been quick to respond to his questions and their comments on his work always brings a smile to his face. He feels they truly care for him and value him as a unique student. I appreciate the fact that they keep me informed on what is going on and are well organized. He is able to get his work done with no fuss/frills that are part of the brick and mortar schools. It may be important to some kids to attend pep rallies and assemblies but for my son, they are a nightmare.

I also wanted to let you know that my daughter, Raelyn Clary, was part of GOVS graduating class of 2020. I am also proud to say that she earned straight A's her senior year.

I sincerely hope that you take into consideration all these children, like mine, that depend on the choice of an online school to accomplish their goal of successfully earning a high school diploma. Gaven's education is important to us, and we ask that you make this important to you also!

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Clary  
Bellefontaine, Ohio

---

Dear Ohio Senators,

I am writing to you in support of GOVS Virtual School and the funding proposed in HB 123. I have been working with the Greater Ohio Virtual School for this school year in the capacity of a tutor for students looking for help. I have taught in Ohio for over 17 years and been an administrator in a separate school facility for students with mental health and behavioral disabilities. I have worked with the most at risk students for most of my career and many of them do not find success in a traditional school setting. I have been so proud of the work I did this year with several students. The one on one tutoring that I was able to do with these students far and away impacted their self-esteem and learning capacity. In a traditional setting they would have felt like they were not smart enough and been embarrassed to ask questions or try to show off for students to not highlight their struggles. The students I worked with made real progress towards their goals and did so in a safe environment that they may not find anywhere else. Please consider giving your support to the changes in funding. Many students are taking advantage of the great opportunity and finding success.

Feel free to contact me at [seaman.elaine@yahoo.com](mailto:seaman.elaine@yahoo.com) for any questions about my experiences working with these great students and for this excellent program.

Sincerely,

Elaine Nichols

---

My son attended Ohio Virtual school because he needed one on one help with school. He was struggling and was not happy where he was at. It also was convenient for us as parents to keep better track of his progress and his grades. While at Ohio Virtual school (Govs) he received the one on one attention he needed to graduate. His teachers and counselors was wonderful and took

time for him and us if we had any questions. He had the extra help with work and extra time he needed to get through the school years . We have been very pleased with his progress and the way the school has been a great support and a positive setting for our son. We feel this school is very important for children like our son who needs the extra time and extra help to make them successful . Thank you MR and Mrs Stansell

---

Dear Senator Brenner,

I am writing you today to tell you the story of one amazing kid who happens to be my nephew. Adam Banford is a 17-year old, soon-to-be senior in high school living in Springboro. From the time he was little, he was advanced in his academics and has always excelled. He was in the Junior National Honor Society, and to my knowledge, has always gotten straight A's. He loves school and puts forth the effort to do his best. On top of that, he is a funny, witty, hard-working, kind-hearted, thoughtful, social kid. He played soccer, baseball and basketball when he was younger. As he became a teenager, those morphed into golf, and he made the Springboro golf team. He is social and has always had a lot of friends. His kindness, coupled with his drive, has led him to volunteer through his church and other organizations to help those with disabilities or who otherwise need assistance. He has been an active member of Young Life as well. He *truly* is a special person, and I am so proud to be his aunt.

You are probably wondering why I am telling you about this “normal” kid who has done well in his life. That is because his story goes much deeper. For many years, he has battled Rheumatoid Arthritis (“RA”). He is often in pain in his feet or hands/wrist or back. He received infusions for a while and other treatments that pulled him away from school. Then, starting on just the third day of high school, this driven, social kid who loves school began having anxiety attacks so severe that he was unable to go to school, restaurants, doctors or even a barber. His therapist suspected this could be somehow tied to his RA, as she had treated multiple seemingly well-adjusted kids for extreme anxiety who also had RA. Who knows? The Springboro administration worked with him the best they could since they knew what a good student he was and how much he wanted to be there, but ultimately by Thanksgiving 2017, he had to leave traditional schooling and find an alternative. That has been the **Greater Ohio Virtual School (“GOVS”)**.

What a challenge it can be for many students to take classes completely on-line. Hasn't this been more top of mind than ever as we are all facing the COVID-19 pandemic? Yet Adam has **THRIVED** in this environment, self-driven and passionate about doing his best. While he is still fighting his crippling anxiety, he has ensured his educational record remains top notch. He is about to enter his senior year and is scheduled to predominantly take College Credit Plus (“CCP”) classes through Sinclair. He has **just one more year** to complete his high school career with the help of his saving grace, GOVS. That is, if GOVS remains open.

During this time when there are tough decisions to make with budgets, I am *pleading* with you to please consider Adam before you decide what to do about GOVS. Without that as an option, I really don't know what will happen to him. I know he will not be able to go to a traditional school setting. It could have a catastrophic impact on Adam who is such a wonderful

person. Please also consider the many families who may not feel comfortable sending their children back to school this next year while the pandemic is in place. A solid program like GOVS will likely be more needed than ever across the state. It is prudent to keep the program open during the pandemic and reassess the program after the 2020-2021 school year.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

***Kelly C. Poellein***

Senior Vice President, Finance

The David J. Joseph Company

300 Pike Street

Cincinnati, OH 45202

Office: (513) 419-6050

---

Senator Andy Brenner:

Good morning. I have had the opportunity to work as a mentor, tutor and test administrator for GOVS for the past two years. GOVS is *needed* in our state to help students that *NEED* a school that meets their educational *needs* at this point of their lives. Traditional school has not worked for GOVS students. An 8th grade student of mine that I have tutored for the past two years is a perfect example of why keeping GOVS open has worked for her. This young lady is diagnosed with ADHD. She has an extremely difficult time paying attention in school. She comes from a loving family and they recognized her *needs* and worked with her traditional school to help her find breaks in her day or additional supports to help her succeed, but her *needs* were not being met. Her parents chose GOVS as a school that meets her *needs*. Now this young lady can learn at her own pace with breaks. She is succeeding in understanding and applying the curriculum in her life, and she has earned straight As in almost every course while at GOVS the past two years. Her 2019 AIR scores also increased. In addition, she is also able to take courses at her own pace, and she is taking some courses above her grade level. She now has a goal to take college courses for credit during her high school years.

I know I am overusing the word *NEED* in my paragraph above. This is because students in our state *NEED* an alternate school choice to educationally succeed.

I ask that you fight to keep GOVS open for students in the state of Ohio.

Sincerely,

*Mrs. Molly Kane, M.Ed*

Highland Heights, OH 44143

---

Dear Senator Andy Brenner,

I am contacting you regarding revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. My name is Matthew Lamb and I am currently an 11th grade student with GOVS. I recently turned 18-years old. I should have graduated from high school this year but prior to enrolling with GOVS, I fell behind in school while in junior high and my freshman year. While in junior high, I was forced to repeat school two times. I started struggling in school when I was

in 6th grade and my family was very unstable. My mother's fiance started to sexually abuse me. There were a lot of court sessions that prevented me from going to school and I was having a hard time focusing on learning. I decided to enroll in a virtual school because it was not easy for me to work in groups. While in a virtual school I get more individual help. I am also able to work at my own pace. I now live with my dad. My dad sometimes works 2nd and 3rd shifts and I am able to adjust my school schedule to match his work schedule. This is very important to us so we can spend time together.

It is important for me to earn my high school diploma. After high school, I would like to find a job as a diesel mechanic or computer technician. I live with my dad, my grandma, and 4 other relatives in a 2 bedroom apartment. My dream is to have a job to buy a house for my family.

Please keep my school open so I can graduate and have a good job!

Sincerely,

Matthew Lamb

---

Senators:

Warren County has always put a value in education. When I first started working as a magistrate in Warren County Juvenile Court in 1996, we had a certain way of doing things. And that way worked. I then found myself working as a judge in an adult court for several years, taking me away from the juvenile justice world. In 2013, thanks to Governor Kasich, I found myself again working with the juvenile population. I was amazed at the changes that had occurred in my absence until I returned in 2013. Not just in juvenile justice, but also in everything else we do involving juveniles -- including education.

Virtual schools were foreign to me when I returned to the court in 2013. I soon realized virtual schools are the way of the future. Personally, I couldn't do it. I like going into a classroom and having the experience of group learning, live and in-person. But, this letter isn't about me. It's about the number of children that receive online education every year in Warren County. Many prefer it. They thrive in it. And, as we have seen far too many times, if it weren't for having the choice of getting an education online, many would have failed to complete their education.

I don't have the statistics to share with you the number of children who have completed an online education in Warren County. All I can say is it has grown in popularity, and I have seen first-hand the success stories of some children who struggled in a traditional school setting, but found success because of an online schooling opportunity made available to them.

That is why I send you this email in support of online schools, namely the Greater Ohio Virtual School (GOVS). Perhaps a school like GOVS was what Ignacio Estrada was referring to when he said "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn." Traditional schools are great -- they have served me and my family well. However, some children need, and quite frankly deserve, a different option to receive

education. GOVS and other e-schools are providing that option and are doing so with remarkable results.

That is why I am in support of allowing these schools to continue in the future.

Sincerely,



**Joseph W.  
Kirby,  
Judge**



**Warren County Probate-Juvenile Court**

900 Memorial Drive | Lebanon, OH 45036  
513.695.2686 | Fax: 513.695.2345  
[JdgJoseph.Kirby@co.warren.oh.us](mailto:JdgJoseph.Kirby@co.warren.oh.us)  
| [www.co.warren.oh.us/probate\\_juvenile](http://www.co.warren.oh.us/probate_juvenile)

**"Nothing you do for children is ever wasted."**

**- Garrison Keillor**

---

June 23, 2020

Honorable Senators and Chairwoman Lehner,

This is a letter encouraging the continued support for The Greater Ohio Virtual School (GOVS) located in Lebanon, Ohio. Many southwest Ohio school districts have been supporters of the GOVS program since its inception and have utilized their services to benefit many students including several Goshen Local Schools students.

The support the GOVS staff provides for our students who are at risk, do not fit the traditional education route or have behavior/mental health problems has been key to steering many kids to a path of success instead of failure. My Govs administration and staff have accepted Goshen students readily and openly. We have always worked well in providing support as a student enters the GOVS program and/or if they return to the home school after an extended period of time. The GOVS staff has even worked with us on half time status to ensure a student earns their high school diploma.

To hear that this program may no longer be funded is a tragic thing for many students in Goshen and many more in areas of southwest Ohio. We can depend upon them to help when we see a student becoming overwhelmed with school, family issues and other concerns. It shocks me to think they could not be an option this school year, especially in a time when remote instruction may be the only option for many of Ohio's families. Even more of a concern is the reopening of school for 2020-2021 being different than previous years, what options do we have for those students previously mentioned and accepted at GOVS? As you can see we are a true advocate of the program and will be very discouraged if it is not there for our students as an alternative pathway for graduation.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 513-722-2222.

Sincerely,  
Thank You,  
Brian Bailey  
Assistant Superintendent  
Goshen Local Schools  
Work- 513.722.2222 |

---

Dear Senator Andy Brenner,

My name is McKinlee Cook, a 2020 graduate from Greater Ohio Virtual School (GOVS). I come to you in hopes to take a few moments out of your day to read why drop out prevention programs such as GOVS are vital for people such as myself. I joined GOVS my sophomore year of high school desperate for a curriculum that fit my needs. This was my last chance to finish high school with a diploma. My childhood involved moving from Kentucky to Ohio. It was not uncommon for me to switch schools three or more times a year to meet my mothers medical and financial requirements. GOVS was not only a safe haven providing me with academic stability that I couldn't receive in a normal school, but it also met my needs for flexibility as I had to get a job in order to provide for myself. GOVS opened a door for me that otherwise would have never been an option. Although I was not at fault for my circumstances, I still fell victim to them. I faced many hardships that ultimately would have caused me to drop out if GOVS would not have been there for me to fall back on. The three years I spent at this school, I made better grades than I ever had. For the first time that I can remember I understood what I was being taught. The confidence I've gained will play a major part in the life I will go on to live. Thanks to GOVS I have broke the generational curse of being a high school drop-out! Before, college was never an option but now I'm strongly considering pursuing a teaching degree. I desire to be the change that GOVS was for me. Now my little brother is following the same path as I, he just finished his first week at McDonalds. *I am so proud of him for following after his big sister and working toward a brighter future. If he does not have GOVS to return to in the fall, I fear he will lose a lifetime of opportunities that he will attain with the support of GOVS. I may have made it, but there is a whole generation out there that will lose the support they need to create better lives for themselves. I desperately ask you to keep in mind kids like me who need more than what brick and mortar schools have to offer. We can be the change with you on our side.*

Sincerely,

Good Afternoon,

I would like to voice my approval of online DOPR schools, and to request you work on a funding fix for the continuation of such wonderful schools.

My granddaughter attended Greater Ohio Virtual School in Lebanon Ohio. She graduated this year. She would never have graduated if it hadn't been for GOVS. She has very high anxiety along with ADHD. She was unable to attend a regular "brick and mortar" school because of these issues. She would have ended up being a high school dropout.

I have no doubt in my mind with the Coronavirus Pandemic there will be a lot more kids having issues with "brick and mortar" schools and DOPR schools will be a valuable resource for them..

--

Lois Warrick

---

Dear Senator Brenner,

It has come to my attention that Ohio's Online DOPR schools are in jeopardy of being shut down. As a mother of an online student, I would like to send my plea that a solution can be found, so that the students of this state may continue to attend Online Schooling, for whatever reason each of them may have. In our case, Online Schooling was a blessing for my son and most certainly bettered his life. I have two children that grew up in the Franklin Monroe Local School District in Darke County Ohio. My son had been the victim of bullying since the 4th grade and had continuously asked me to get him out of that school. After going through a divorce in 2010 and being forced to agree to a Shared Parenting Agreement, I was unable to withdraw my son from his Public School, because his father would not agree to it. By the time my son was in 11th grade, The bullying was so bad, that my son ended up suspended for making a remark to his bully. His school is known for not attending to the bullying situations and for a poor quality in many of the Faculty. My son was to the point where he was contemplating suicide. After another long Court battle that same year, I was granted custody of my son and was able to enroll him in the Greater Ohio Virtual School where he thrived better then he had done in the past many years at his Public School. His demeanor and his attitude towards life changed for the better because of being able to attend an Online School. Also during this time, I had gotten remarried and moved an hour and a half away from Darke County. Without GOVS Online Schooling, my son would have either had to stay at the same Public School or try to attend a new school during his senior year in a completely unfamiliar area. My daughter still attends school in Darke County and unless I give up most of my time with her, we have to drive 1 1/2 hours to get her to school on the days I have her. I hope to enroll her in Online Schooling as well in the near future. My situation is an odd and a difficult one and we are just one family in the whole state, but for us, Online DOPR Schools were the best option and hopefully will be again.

Sincerely,

Leah Young

Martinsviile, Ohio 45146

---

Dear Senators:

I have taught at The Greater Ohio Virtual School for more than ten years and have worked with hundreds and hundreds of students. Many of our students would not have graduated from high school at all if they hadn't had GOVS. I could share success stories with you for hours. I've seen young parents working online late at night to earn their diplomas. I've seen students who are working 40 hours a week to help support their families, and they need the flexibility of a GOVS schedule to earn their diplomas. I've seen students who wish to get a jump start on college, and they need a GOVS schedule to finish high school. I've seen students earn their diplomas at GOVS and leave for the military. These are real students with real goals, and they needed GOVS to get them to their goals. Traditional schooling cannot meet the needs of all children. Many children need the opportunities GOVS can give them. If GOVS closes, these students will feel lost and without a place to go.

Please help keep the Greater Ohio Virtual School open and serving Ohio's students!

Sincerely,

Tracy Showalter

---

I contact you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. I work at the Greater Ohio Virtual School as the Student Support Coordinator. I also serve as a math teacher, a music teacher, tutor, and mentor. This is my 23<sup>rd</sup> year in education – eighteen years in *traditional* Ohio public schools, three years at the college level, and the past two full-time at GOVS. I came to GOVS because I have known our Executive Director, Mr. Shawn E. Lenney, since college. He and I share the same passion for education; when he asked me five years ago if I would do some tutoring to help a few seniors finish up and graduate, I didn't think twice about it.

The Greater Ohio Virtual School provided education to almost 1200 students during the 2019-2020 school year. Since we are a dropout prevention & credit recovery school, our enrollment is quite fluid. Some students join us because they are going through a medical issue and need to work from home. Some students join us because traditional schools do not meet their needs. Many of our students work full-time to support their respective families, so a *normal* school day does not help them. We have a strong group of English Language Learners who succeed here because of our ELL coordinator Mrs. Sara Melendez. While we had 1200 students, we had close to 700 finish the year with us as active students. Out of that number, we graduated 169 students! In fact, according to Mr. Lenney, we have graduated over 1800 students since we started.

As you are well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has created hardships and generated uncertainty for all schools operating in Ohio. This is especially true for those DOPR schools, which educate Ohio's most vulnerable students. Unfortunately, uncertainty around funding has threatened the survival of these schools, which will likely lead to many at-risk students being left without the resources and services they need to succeed.

Like other online schools, DOPR E-schools are funded based on student participation, which requires extensive and burdensome tracking of student engagement. Basing funding on student participation or “seat time” poses a specific challenge for DOPR E-schools, which serve a population of predominately at-risk students. Often, despite a school’s best efforts, it can take time for a vulnerable student to actively engage in learning opportunities. Unfortunately, under Ohio’s current funding model, those efforts and services go unfunded, simply because the student did not participate. DOPR schools often enroll students with a long history of truancy issues and challenges that made them unsuccessful in a traditional environment. Unless a student has 100% attendance immediately, an E-school will not receive full funding. In other words, funding DOPR E-schools based on seat-time unfairly punishes DOPR schools for the students they enroll and try so desperately to help.

Through working with DOPR E-schools there has been a proposal developed creating a three-tiered funding system that would provide schools with the financial support necessary to ensure students receive the initial support needed to succeed, continue to fund DOPR E-schools based on participation, and reward student achievement. This proposal funding model is not aimed at increasing the total amount of funding DOPR E-schools receive per student, but instead merely provides additional pathways to earn full funding for a student.

The first funding tier would provide a one-time payment of \$1,750 for the student’s initial enrollment in the school. This would ensure the school is able to cover initial expenses such as the computer, internet access, counseling and other services necessary to get students re-engaged in educational activities. The second tier would continue to use student participation as a measure. This is important because schools have already made significant investments in student monitoring technology and software. Student tracking is also important to ensure accountability and can provide useful information to the state on student engagement. The final tier would offer funding for achievement or completion of credits. Earning a diploma should be the ultimate goal of any school in Ohio. This is certainly the case for DOPR schools; however, the current funding model penalizes these schools when a student earns credits towards graduating but does not participate in the full 920 hours. It is important to note, that funding would be capped at the current formula amount or (\$6,020 per student) plus any categorical funds for students who receive special education or career-technical education services (as is in current law).

For anyone concerned about the financial impact this proposal will have, I urge them to consider the financial impact of having DOPR E-schools close. According to a recent E-school funding report issued by ODE, DOPR E-schools serve 7,686 students (the report shows a total of 37,733 students being served by E-schools). That same report (Table 3) compares the headcount of students at each E-school and the FTE that each E-school generated during the course of the year. You will see that general education E-schools were funded at 66.7% of total student headcount. DOPR E-schools on the other hand received funding at 49.7% of total student headcount.<sup>[1]</sup> If DOPR E-schools are forced to close over funding constraints, what will happen to their students? The students will likely either return to the traditional school setting and likely continue to struggle to participate (while the traditional school will receive full funding for the

---

<sup>[1]</sup> <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Finance-and-Funding/School-Payment-Reports/State-Funding-For-Schools/Community-School-Funding/Community-School-Funding-Information/Study-of-Internet-or-Computer-Based-Community-School-Funding-Models-1-1.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

student) or the student will drop out of school completely, and likely cost the state more in the long run.

The need for this funding change is more necessary now than ever before, considering schools are being forced to adapt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional schools that move to an online learning model for the upcoming school year likely won't need to adhere to the student monitoring requirements that E-schools are currently forced to meet. Additionally, traditional schools' funding also likely won't be tied to seat-time as an E-school's funding currently is. The pandemic has also impacted student engagement, as things like testing requirements have been lifted. While foregoing certain testing requirements was likely the correct policy given the state of the crisis, DOPR E-schools were previously able to count, and be funded for, the time a student spent testing. With testing requirements lifted, those hours will likely go unaccounted, and therefore, unfunded.

DOPR E-schools are not immune to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. These schools have worked to continue serving their students during the crisis and face the same uncertainty as any other school entering the upcoming school year. By adopting this revised funding model for DOPR E-schools we can ensure that they receive the funding necessary to continue serving Ohio's most at-risk populations.

From March 16 through May 29, the GOVS office staff met every morning at 10:00am via Google Meet to have our daily meeting. Without fail, we were all there ready to go, and ready to keep serving our students. One of the big topics was how we were going to recognize our graduates. We came up with the Senior Salute – close to 120 of our graduates came up to our little office in Lebanon, Ohio, and we celebrated and honored them. Students decorated their cars. We gave them diplomas and a free cap/gown/tassel. Students brought other family members with them – in fact, one student brought fifteen other cars to celebrate with her! To see the looks on these individual faces was one of the best memories of my life. Without a school like GOVS, these students most likely would not make it to graduation.

I also serve as the de facto webmaster for our school. If you want to see what we are all about, please visit our website at [www.mygovs.com](http://www.mygovs.com), and in the daily announcement feed, there are a few links about our Virtual Graduation Ceremony. You can hear congratulations from GOVS staff members, plus a few local celebrities. You can see how the students thanked certain people for helping them get across the finish line. At the end of the virtual graduation video, you can see some pictures of the aforementioned Senior Salute.

Thank you for your time, and I hope this letter helps you understand why the Greater Ohio Virtual School (and other Ohio DOPR schools) are advocating for E-school funding reforms.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. Chuck Merk  
Student Support Coordinator  
Greater Ohio Virtual School  
[chuck.merk@mygovs.com](mailto:chuck.merk@mygovs.com)

513.480.2519



**Mr. Chuck Merk**  
Student Support Coordinator

**cell:** 513.480.2519

**email:** [chuck.merk@mygovs.com](mailto:chuck.merk@mygovs.com)

**website:** [www.mygovs.com](http://www.mygovs.com)

*“We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” -- Gandhi*

---

Chairwoman Lehner:

We are contacting you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting it has created hardships and uncertainty for all schools operating in Ohio. We have been told that this is especially true for DOPR schools, which are educating are state’s most vulnerable students. With the uncertainty of future funding for these schools and the possibility of closures, we are concerned that many at-risk students will be left without resources and the services they need to complete their education.

We work for the Warren County Educational Service Center under the Coordinated Care Department. Within our department are several programs all of which work with at-risk children and their families. We provide prevention, support and interventions to families and children within Warren County who may be struggling with emotional or behavioral issues. We work hand in hand with Greater Ohio Virtual School as the educational piece for many of the children we work with. It is often a team effort to support and help the student through their educational journey to graduation.

We have all watched GOVS grow and prosper and help hundreds of students along the way. Each of us have many stories of students we have worked with that would have never graduated and received a diploma without being able to participate in a program like GOVS. It is a collaboration of many that often helps these students get through but without this program being around none of us have any idea how these kids would have been successful. We don’t

have any other resource available in the area where these at-risk students could have turned to and been successful.

The 2020 school year saw 170 graduates and we all personally know many who would not have been in that statistic without a DOPR option available to them. The department and all the programs will be devastated if funding is not fixed and GOVS has to close down. We also can't imagine the how the students who are currently enrolled will react if they are told their school is shutting down and they have to find somewhere else to go. Where will they go? Will they even try to find anywhere else to go? What will happen to them?

In June we had the privilege of watching as students drove in front of our office to receive their diplomas after the hard work they had put in. Due to the pandemic graduation was a bit different this year but the entire staff at GOVS made it a most memorable afternoon and then the virtual ceremony a few days later. There were several students that each of us have worked with over the last few years and the pride we saw beaming from the graduates face as well as the family members that came with them was PRICELESS. These students are seeds that were planted and would've never grown without the help of a resource called GOVS.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and considering supporting the proposed amendment revising funding for DOPR E-schools.

Sincerely,

The WCESC Coordinated Care Team

Charrise Marnocha – Parent Success  
Jenny Whatley – Coordinated Care  
Tim Howcroft – Coordinated Care  
Kim Dooley – Substance Abuse Prevention  
Shelley Brown – Substance Abuse Prevention/Truancy  
Charlie Gillespie – Diversion  
Carrie Lipps – Diversion  
Carrie Brown – Diversion

Charrise Marnocha  
Parent Education Specialist  
Warren County Educational Service Center  
(513) 695-2900 ext 2968

Attitudes are contagious....Is yours worth catching??

---

The Honorable Andy Brenner  
Ohio Senate

Senator Brenner,

I contact you today to urge support for an amendment to HB 123, revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. As you are well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has created hardships and generated uncertainty for all schools operating in Ohio. This is especially true for those DOPR schools, which educate Ohio's most vulnerable students. Unfortunately, uncertainty around funding has threatened the survival of these schools, which will likely lead to many at-risk students being left without the resources and services they need to succeed.

As a tutor for the Greater Ohio Virtual School (GOVS), I have worked with some outstanding young people who are determined to get their diplomas. Most of these students have circumstances that do not allow them quality access and success in traditional schools. These at-risk students have jobs, they take care of parents or siblings and they are often bullied in traditional school settings.

The alternative for these young people who are not a good fit for public school would be to drop out entirely or to get a GED. One of the young ladies I worked with was expecting a child, struggling to work and maintain her housing, and fully committed to getting a High School Diploma! The GOVS platform offered her access that she could never get in a public school. She could work on her lessons in the evenings and on weekends. She could get a diploma. She told me that she wanted to make her life better and the first step in that direction is a diploma, not a GED. From her point of view, if employers are splitting hairs between two candidates with equal employment potential, are they more likely to choose the one with the diploma or the GED?

Like other online schools, DOPR E-schools are funded based on student participation, which requires extensive and burdensome tracking of student engagement. Basing funding on student participation or "seat-time" poses a specific challenge for DOPR E-schools, which serve a population of predominately at-risk students. The young lady I mentioned previously is a prime example. She is struggling to work, keep her housing and prepare for a baby. Unfortunately, under Ohio's current funding model, if she is unable to log in for 5 hours of seat-time every single day, there is no funding for her.

Also under the current system, the E-school does not receive full funding unless a student has 100% attendance immediately, in the form of 5 hours of "seat-time" in front of the screen. There is a transition time for students learning the platform and arranging a good schedule for school work while trying to manage work and family obligations. In other words, funding DOPR E-schools based on seat-time unfairly punishes DOPR schools for the students they enroll and try so desperately to help.

Please support the proposal for a three-tiered funding system. This proposal funding model is designed to provide additional pathways to earn full funding for each student rather than assigning an all-or-nothing dollar amount per student enrolled.

The first funding tier would provide a one-time payment of \$1,750 for the student's initial enrollment in the school. This would ensure the school is able to cover initial expenses such as the computer, internet access, counselling and other services necessary to get students re-engaged in educational activities. The second tier would continue to use student participation as a measure. This is important because schools have already made significant investments in student monitoring technology and software. Student tracking is also important to ensure accountability and can provide useful information to the state on student engagement. The final tier would offer funding for achievement or completion of credits. Earning a diploma should be the ultimate goal of any school in Ohio. This is certainly the case for DOPR schools; however, the current funding model penalizes these schools when a student earns credits towards graduating, but does not participate in the full 920 hours. It is important to note, that funding would be capped at the current formula amount or (\$6,020 per student) plus any categorical funds for students who receive special education or career-technical education services (as is in current law).

I urge you to consider the financial impact of closing DOPR E-schools. According to a recent E-school funding report issued by ODE, DOPR E-schools serve 7,686 students (the report shows a total of 37,733 students being served by E-schools). That same report (Table 3) compares the headcount of students at each E-school and the FTE that each E-school generated during the course of the year. You will see that general education E-schools were funded at 66.7% of total student headcount. DOPR E-schools on the other hand received funding at 49.7% of total student headcount.[1] If DOPR E-schools are forced to close over funding constraints, what will happen to their students? The students will likely be pushed back into a traditional school, (which will receive full funding for the student) or the student will drop out of school completely, and likely cost the state more in the long run for social services.

DOPR E-schools have worked to continue serving their students during the COVID-19 crisis and face the same uncertainty as any other school entering the upcoming school year. By adopting this revised funding model for DOPR E-schools we can ensure that they receive the funding necessary to continue serving Ohio's most at-risk populations.

I'm urging you to support the amendment to HB 123 in favor of an equitable 3 tier funding plan for Ohio DOPR E-schools.

Sincerely,

Michelle Griffith, M.Ed.  
GOVS school tutor

---

Senator Andrew O. Brenner  
Senate Building  
1 Capitol Square, Ground Floor

Columbus, OH 43215

Senator Brenner,

My name is MacKenzie Hammock, and I have served as a tutor and mentor at the Greater Ohio Virtual School for the past 18 months. I contact you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. As you are well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has created hardships and generated uncertainty for all schools operating in Ohio. This is especially true for those DOPR schools, which educate Ohio's most vulnerable students. Unfortunately, uncertainty around funding has threatened the survival of these schools, which will likely lead to many at-risk students being left without the resources and services they need to succeed.

As a tutor and mentor for GOVS, I spend many hours of my day working with these at-risk students, many of whom are providers for their own households, and therefore are required to keep hours unlike that of the traditional student. Others experience considerable physical and mental health obstacles, which make traditional school environments an unsuitable option. Regardless of their backgrounds, it is apparent that, in view of their unconventional academic performances, the metric by which these students' academic success is measured—and by which their financial support is granted—should be equally as unconventional. One of my long-time students, who we'll call Q, is an excellent example of why.

Q is one of the brightest young minds I have ever had the privilege of working with; and I would not at all be surprised if he, with his interest in civics, and innate understanding of diplomacy and ethics, becomes a public servant himself one day. However, between his epilepsy, ADHD, information processing issues, and working to help support his family, he quickly fell behind at his former traditional school. In my 18 months of working with him over the phone, I have learned that he requires a tremendous amount of one-on-one help in order to put his thoughts down on paper—but I have also learned that personal connections, like the one we have forged, is where he feels the most confident to put forth his best effort. When it comes to his English classes, we comb through the assigned literature, dive into the context of the reading, and have frank discussions about what he thinks. It is not a quick process, but it is a necessary one in order for him to understand what is being asked of him, and for him to do his best work. At the start of 2019, he struggled to write a single paragraph. By May of 2020, he was writing multiple-page research compositions, correctly self-editing his work, and expressing confidence in his ideas. His academic growth is evident—and I strongly doubt whether he would have had the same results, had he continued in a traditional, more hands-off educational setting. His mother once commented, "I appreciate the help so much, and wish we would have signed up sooner." Students like Q, who flourish in non-traditional environments, would be done a great disservice without vital and necessary funding for DOPR E-schools like GOVS.

Like other online schools, DOPR E-schools are funded based on student participation, which requires extensive and burdensome tracking of student engagement. Basing funding on student participation or "seat time" poses a specific challenge for DOPR E-schools, which serve a population of predominantly at-risk students. Often, despite a school's best efforts, it can take

time for a vulnerable student to actively engage in learning opportunities. Unfortunately, under Ohio's current funding model, those efforts and services go unfunded, simply because the student did not participate. DOPR schools often enroll students with a long history of truancy issues and challenges that made them unsuccessful in a traditional environment. Unless a student has 100% attendance immediately, an E-school will not receive full funding. In other words, funding DOPR E-schools based on seat-time unfairly punishes DOPR schools for the students they enroll and try so desperately to help.

Through working with DOPR E-schools there has been a proposal developed creating a three-tiered funding system that would provide schools with the financial support necessary to ensure students receive the initial support needed to succeed, continue to fund DOPR E-schools based on participation, and reward student achievement. This proposal funding model is not aimed at increasing the total amount of funding DOPR E-schools receive per student, but instead merely provides additional pathways to earn full funding for a student.

The first funding tier would provide a one-time payment of \$1,750 for the student's initial enrollment in the school. This would ensure the school is able to cover initial expenses such as the computer, internet access, counselling and other services necessary to get students re-engaged in educational activities. The second tier would continue to use student participation as a measure. This is important because schools have already made significant investments in student monitoring technology and software. Student tracking is also important to ensure accountability and can provide useful information to the state on student engagement. The final tier would offer funding for achievement or completion of credits. Earning a diploma should be the ultimate goal of any school in Ohio. This is certainly the case for DOPR schools; however, the current funding model penalizes these schools when a student earns credits towards graduating, but does not participate in the full 920 hours. It is important to note, that funding would be capped at the current formula amount or (\$6,020 per student) plus any categorical funds for students who receive special education or career-technical education services (as is in current law).

For anyone concerned about the financial impact this proposal will have, I urge them to consider the financial impact of having DOPR E-schools close. According to a recent E-school funding report issued by ODE, DOPR E-schools serve 7,686 students (the report shows a total of 37,733 students being served by E-schools). That same report (Table 3) compares the headcount of students at each E-school and the FTE that each E-school generated during the course of the year. You will see that general education E-schools were funded at 66.7% of total student headcount. DOPR E-schools on the other hand received funding at 49.7% of total student headcount. If DOPR E-schools are forced to close over funding constraints, what will happen to their students? The students will likely either return to the traditional school setting and likely continue to struggle to participate (while the traditional school will receive full funding for the student) or the student will drop out of school completely, and likely cost the state more in the long run.

The need for this funding change is more necessary now than ever before, considering schools are being forced to adapt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional schools that move to an online learning model for the upcoming school year likely won't need to adhere to the student

monitoring requirements that E-schools are currently forced to meet. Additionally, traditional schools' funding also likely won't be tied to seat-time as an E-school's funding currently is. The pandemic has also impacted student engagement, as things like testing requirements have been lifted. While foregoing certain testing requirements was likely the correct policy given the state of the crisis, DOPR E-schools were previously able count, and funded for, the time a student spent testing. With testing requirements lifted, those hours will likely go unaccounted, and therefore, unfunded.

DOPR E-schools are not immune to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. These schools have worked to continue serving their students during the crisis and face the same uncertainty as any other school entering the upcoming school year. By adopting this revised funding model for DOPR E-schools, we can ensure that they receive the funding necessary to continue serving Ohio's most at-risk populations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,  
MacKenzie Hammock  
Tutor and Mentor, Greater Ohio Virtual School

---

The Honorable Andy Brenner  
Senate Building, 1 Capitol Square, Ground Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Senator Brenner,

My name is Vicki Hammock, and I have been an Intervention Specialist for the past four years at Greater Ohio Virtual School (GOVS), a DOPR E-school. Prior to working for GOVS, I was an Intervention Specialist in a public brick-and-mortar setting for close to 32 years. In that time, while teaching in the public school system, we had several students leave due to various reasons, such as physical and mental issues, parenthood, the need to financially support their family, and more. After retiring and taking a position at GOVS, I was able to see what a valuable resource E-schools are to at-risk students. At GOVS, students are not held to a rigid academic schedule, and therefore have the opportunity to be able to work at their own pace while balancing their personal responsibilities. The students are also able to build supportive relationships with mentors and teachers that they may not have experienced elsewhere.

I have seen many beautiful success stories come out of GOVS. Some of my earlier success stories at GOVS were of former students whom I had the pleasure of teaching in middle school, and then again in high school, while working in the public brick-and-mortar setting. After coming to GOVS, I was able to see them through to graduation, which was an exciting moment for each of them, as well as heartwarming for myself!

One success story in particular is of a 21-year-old male who was a parent of two children, and the sole provider for his family. While working with him, he held two jobs in order to continually provide that support. He scheduled his schoolwork around spending time with his children, and working at his job, which also included occasional travel. He worked very hard, and was able to graduate from GOVS, and received a promotion that was promised to him if he earned his diploma. An additional success story of mine is of a young man who was incarcerated in a juvenile detention center, and was in the custody of Children's Services. Prior to being incarcerated, he had also lost two family members to suicide. Through the support of GOVS and county agencies, he was able to complete the amount of credits needed to graduate in four months, just a few days shy of his 18th birthday. He was released from the juvenile detention center, and went on to gain successful employment. I am so proud of all of my students, and could spend countless hours describing their accomplishments.

Funding for programs such as GOVS is crucial for supporting at-risk students like these. DOPR E-schools such as GOVS give many at-risk students a chance for academic success, and can open the door for greater employment opportunities. If these institutions weren't available, there would be a significant chance that these students would never graduate from high school. Seeing that GOVS graduated 170 students this school year, it is clear that schools such as ours are making a huge impact on the lives of its students, many of whom are the first in their families to graduate from high school.

I contact you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. As you are well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has created hardships and generated uncertainty for all schools operating in Ohio. This is especially true for those DOPR schools, which educate Ohio's most vulnerable students. Unfortunately, uncertainty around funding has threatened the survival of these schools, which will likely lead to many at-risk students being left without the resources and services they need to succeed.

Like other online schools, DOPR E-schools are funded based on student participation, which requires extensive and burdensome tracking of student engagement. Basing funding on student participation or "seat time" poses a specific challenge for DOPR E-schools, which serve a population of predominantly at-risk students. Often, despite a school's best efforts, it can take time for a vulnerable student to actively engage in learning opportunities. Unfortunately, under Ohio's current funding model, those efforts and services go unfunded, simply because the student did not participate. DOPR schools often enroll students with a long history of truancy issues and challenges that made them unsuccessful in a traditional environment. Unless a student has 100% attendance immediately, an E-school will not receive full funding. In other words, funding DOPR E-schools based on seat-time unfairly punishes DOPR schools for the students they enroll and try so desperately to help.

Through working with DOPR E-schools there has been a proposal developed creating a three-tiered funding system that would provide schools with the financial support necessary to ensure students receive the initial support needed to succeed, continue to fund DOPR E-schools based on participation, and reward student achievement. This proposal funding model is not aimed at increasing the total amount of funding DOPR E-schools receive per student, but instead merely provides additional pathways to earn full funding for a student.

The first funding tier would provide a one-time payment of \$1,750 for the student's initial enrollment in the school. This would ensure the school is able to cover initial expenses such as the computer, internet access, counselling and other services necessary to get students re-engaged in educational activities. The second tier would continue to use student participation as a measure. This is important because schools have already made significant investments in student monitoring technology and software. Student tracking is also important to ensure accountability and can provide useful information to the state on student engagement. The final tier would offer funding for achievement or completion of credits. Earning a diploma should be the ultimate goal of any school in Ohio. This is certainly the case for DOPR schools; however, the current funding model penalizes these schools when a student earns credits towards graduating, but does not participate in the full 920 hours. It is important to note, that funding would be capped at the current formula amount or (\$6,020 per student) plus any categorical funds for students who receive special education or career-technical education services (as is in current law).

For anyone concerned about the financial impact this proposal will have, I urge them to consider the financial impact of having DOPR E-schools close. According to a recent E-school funding report issued by ODE, DOPR E-schools serve 7,686 students (the report shows a total of 37,733 students being served by E-schools). That same report (Table 3) compares the headcount of students at each E-school and the FTE that each E-school generated during the course of the year. You will see that general education E-schools were funded at 66.7% of total student headcount. DOPR E-schools on the other hand received funding at 49.7% of total student headcount.<sup>1</sup> If DOPR E-schools are forced to close over funding constraints, what will happen to their students? The students will likely either return to the traditional school setting and likely continue to struggle to participate (while the traditional school will receive full funding for the student) or the student will drop out of school completely, and likely cost the state more in the long run.

The need for this funding change is more necessary now than ever before, considering schools are being forced to adapt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional schools that move to an online learning model for the upcoming school year likely won't need to adhere to the student monitoring requirements that E-schools are currently forced to meet. Additionally, traditional schools' funding also likely won't be tied to seat-time as an E-school's funding currently is. The pandemic has also impacted student engagement, as things like testing requirements have been lifted. While foregoing certain testing requirements was likely the correct policy given the state of the crisis, DOPR E-schools were previously able count, and funded for, the time a student spent testing. With testing requirements lifted, those hours will likely go unaccounted, and therefore, unfunded.

DOPR E-schools are not immune to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. These schools have worked to continue serving their students during the crisis and face the same uncertainty as any other school entering the upcoming school year. By adopting this revised funding model for DOPR E-schools we can ensure that they receive the funding necessary to continue serving Ohio's most at-risk populations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Vicki Hammock, M. Ed.

GOVS Intervention Specialist

---

Senator Andy Brenner

I contact you today to urge support for an amendment revising how dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) E-schools are funded. As you are well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has created hardships and generated uncertainty for all schools operating in Ohio. This is especially true for those DOPR schools, which educate Ohio's most vulnerable students. Unfortunately, uncertainty around funding has threatened the survival of these schools, which will likely lead to many at-risk students being left without the resources and services they need to succeed.

Greater Ohio Virtual School has been providing comfort, purpose, and a "home" to thousands of at-need Ohio students that would otherwise drop out of school and be left battling mental health and neglect issues. I started tutoring with GOVS in 2016 and immediately saw the one-on-one impact and connection teachers in my role have with these young adults. I then sought out my teaching license because I wanted to teach specifically for GOVS because our administration and faculty pour their heart into helping this young adults heal from harassment, bullying, neglect, and loneliness to provide them with purpose, support, motivation, and companionship. GOVS students I've mentored one-on-one through my teaching positions with GOVS have dropped out of a traditional school setting due to bullying, loneliness, lost in the system, family financial burden, lack of parental guidance and support, and many are even raising children of their own. So many of our students would not be completing their education without the availability, convenience, support, and care that our school provides for them. For most of my students, the highlight of their day is their one-on-one time conversing with me and learning a subject they did not think was possible for them to learn. We are unique in that we get the opportunity to influence and motivate these at-need students in a comforting, one-on-one environment.

See the image below of a text message I received from one of my students. He lives in a trailer park under the guidance of his 19-year-old brother. I have so many more testimonies of these students including a student having to work to help keep his family afloat, another pregnant and living couch to couch yet inspired to complete her education for her baby, another excited to excel and graduate early to get away from a mentally challenging home life. These students need GOVS both mentally and physically. We are supporting them now and for their future in a way that is so unique from what a traditional school can provide. Ohio needs E-schools for these students. Equal education experiences for all. Support the vulnerable students in our state by providing them comfort, hope, and motivation in their education.

6:32 ↗



Sam >

Thank you Erica, I know of my potential now and I don't want to make it sound like a joke but you have been the biggest factor, you cared about my education in a time I could've cared less. I was sleeping everyday and taking ages on my lessons and you never gave up on me. To see someone genuinely care about my education inspired me to care about it myself more than ever, I feel bad almost because receiving those gifts from you last year nearly made me cry, to see that someone, especially you, who had dealt with my worst days of school first hand, still cared so much to see me

Like other online schools, DOPR E-schools are funded based on student participation, which requires extensive and burdensome tracking of student engagement. Basing funding on student participation or “seat time” poses a specific challenge for DOPR E-schools, which serve a population of predominately at-risk students. Often, despite a school’s best efforts, it can take time for a vulnerable student to actively engage in learning opportunities. Unfortunately, under Ohio’s current funding model, those efforts and services go unfunded, simply because the student did not participate. DOPR schools often enroll students with a long history of truancy issues and challenges that made them unsuccessful in a traditional environment. Unless a student has 100% attendance immediately, an E-school will not receive full funding. In other words, funding DOPR E-schools based on seat-time unfairly punishes DOPR schools for the students they enroll and try so desperately to help.

Through working with DOPR E-schools there has been a proposal developed creating a three-tiered funding system that would provide schools with the financial support necessary to ensure students receive the initial support needed to succeed, continue to fund DOPR E-schools based on participation, and reward student achievement. This proposal funding model is not aimed at increasing the total amount of funding DOPR E-schools receive per student, but instead merely provides additional pathways to earn full funding for a student.

The first funding tier would provide a one-time payment of \$1,750 for the student’s initial enrollment in the school. This would ensure the school is able to cover initial expenses such as the computer, internet access, counselling and other services necessary to get students re-engaged in educational activities. The second tier would continue to use student participation as a measure. This is important because schools have already made significant investments in student monitoring technology and software. Student tracking is also important to ensure accountability and can provide useful information to the state on student engagement. The final tier would offer funding for achievement or completion of credits. Earning a diploma should be the ultimate goal of any school in Ohio. This is certainly the case for DOPR schools; however, the current funding model penalizes these schools when a student earns credits towards graduating, but does not participate in the full 920 hours. It is important to note, that funding would be capped at the current formula amount or (\$6,020 per student) plus any categorical funds for students who receive special education or career-technical education services (as is in current law).

For anyone concerned about the financial impact this proposal will have, I urge them to consider the financial impact of having DOPR E-schools close. According to a recent E-school funding report issued by ODE, DOPR E-schools serve 7,686 students (the report shows a total of 37,733 students being served by E-schools). That same report (Table 3) compares the headcount of students at each E-school and the FTE that each E-school generated during the course of the year. You will see that general education E-schools were funded at 66.7% of total student headcount. DOPR E-schools on the other hand received funding at 49.7% of total student headcount.<sup>[1]</sup> If DOPR E-schools are forced to close over funding constraints, what will happen to their students? The students will likely either return to the traditional school setting and likely continue to struggle to participate (while the traditional school will receive full funding for the

student) or the student will drop out of school completely, and likely cost the state more in the long run.

The need for this funding change is more necessary now than ever before, considering schools are being forced to adapt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional schools that move to an online learning model for the upcoming school year likely won't need to adhere to the student monitoring requirements that E-schools are currently forced to meet. Additionally, traditional schools' funding also likely won't be tied to seat-time as an E-school's funding currently is. The pandemic has also impacted student engagement, as things like testing requirements have been lifted. While foregoing certain testing requirements was likely the correct policy given the state of the crisis, DOPR E-schools were previously able count, and funded for, the time a student spent testing. With testing requirements lifted, those hours will likely go unaccounted, and therefore, unfunded.

DOPR E-schools are not immune to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. These schools have worked to continue serving their students during the crisis and face the same uncertainty as any other school entering the upcoming school year. By adopting this revised funding model for DOPR E-schools we can ensure that they receive the funding necessary to continue serving Ohio's most at-risk populations.

Thank you,

Miss Erica Goubeaux  
Math Teacher, Tutor, and Mentor  
Greater Ohio Virtual School  
Lebanon, Ohio 45036