

Sir and/or M'am

I hope this letter finds you well. I am a parent who utilizes the Ohio Autism Scholarship with the remote learning option. I am reaching out to ask that you help correct an ODEW staff decision which would end special education services for Ohio's most vulnerable students.

The recent decision to end remote services for the 2024-2025 program year is a severe detriment to my child with autism who is also immunocompromised. It is also a severe detriment to working families as well. My daughter, Cathleen Cassidy receives intervention services 4 times a week for 60-90 minutes each session. This service is provided via zoom so that my child receives one on one intervention in reading, writing and math. She also receives speech therapy via zoom as well. My daughter receives these services during the work day (I work from home full time for a healthcare organization).

The public school district does not provide my child with the services that they need due to lack of services and my daughter's immunocompromised state. My daughter cannot attend a virtual public school for services either as she tires easily, so that is why we homeschool. The autism scholarship provider, Schaefer Education Solutions have given my child excellent services for the past year via zoom. My daughter has made more academic progress in one year with Schaefer than she did in 3 years attending public school.

My daughter is also immunocompromised so in person services are not possible due to us having to still avoid covid, influenza, RSV and other illnesses. The intensive services that my daughter receives via remote intervention provide her with the kind of assistance that she would never receive in public school. She also receives the services while I work from home full time, so that I do not lose wages to take her to in person service

For the past three years, the Jon Peterson and Autism Scholarship has shown admirable flexibility by allowing students with learning disabilities to access tutoring sessions virtually through remote learning. This invaluable opportunity has been a lifeline for children facing medical limitations or residing in areas distant from Jon Peterson and Autism Scholarship providers. It has bridged educational gaps and empowered families to navigate unique challenges, ensuring that no child is left behind.

I ask that the House and Senate pass House Bill 440 before September and that ODEW pass the new rule before September so that my daughter does not miss out on services. Taking the summer off is already putting her at a severe detriment since we can no longer access remote services.

Sincerely,  
Nicole Creech Cassidy  
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