

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you representing: Yourself  Organization

Organization (If Applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Contact Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes  No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): \_\_\_\_\_

Specific Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes  No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

*Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.*

Linnea Smith  
Private Provider to Ohio Scholarships  
Proponent & Interested Party Testimony HB 440  
May 31, 2024

## Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee – HB 440 – Proponent Testimony

Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Robinson, and fellow members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for hearing proponent testimony on House bill 440 today. My name is Linnea Smith, and I am the President of North Coast Tutoring Services, a private education provider to the Jon Peterson Special Needs and Autism Scholarship programs since their respective inception, and a provider of Home Instruction, tutoring, and Professional Development services to Private Schools and Public-School Districts statewide. We are a women-owned small business, operating since 1985. We customize our approach to working with each student.

I am here today on behalf of our clients, tutors, and fellow providers. Currently, North Coast Tutoring provides services to approximately 125 students utilizing Autism and Jon Peterson Scholarships. I thank Representatives Fowler-Arthur and Lear for Sponsoring HB 440 to expediently enact law which expressly permits remote academic services by individuals licensed by the State Board of Education through the Autism and JPSN scholarship programs. Inconsistent communication to providers and families from DEW/ODE regarding remote services during the current scholarship year has resulted in lost instruction, skill regression, lost revenue, as well as a negative impact on student and family mental health.

Continuation of virtual delivery options for academic services is vital to student success. The Autism and Peterson Scholarships serve the unique needs of children who are often fragile emotionally, medically, and/or physically. Students build relationships of trust with a tutor, and often their first experience with academic success!

- Families **do not want** to seek other providers.

*“We have had a great experience with you as our daughter’s Autism Scholarship provider for the last 9 years. North Coast cares about the student getting all the resources they need. In our case, North Coast helped our daughter to stay in high school to earn the last 0.5 credits she needed to graduate on the Autism Scholarship for a year beyond what the school district wanted to provide.”*

Last December, we surveyed families regarding their experience with virtual services from North Coast and several other providers. Here are samples of responses to the questions:

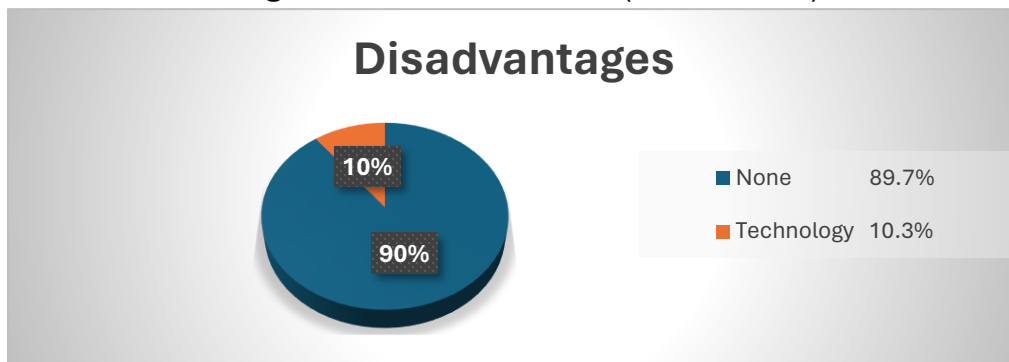
**Why have you chosen for your student to receive remote services? And what are the benefits of your student receiving remote services?**

- Virtual services require fewer transitions for students.
- Student – Tutor matching ensures academic success. A partnership is formed between tutor and family. Specific credentials do not ensure a tutor will be the right fit for any child.
- Students develop relationships with their tutor(s). Many families work with the same tutors year after year.
  - *“[Tutor] has been an instructional assistant and ABA therapist to my son since he was 6 years old. He is now 17! ABA therapy and tutor’s work has been life changing for my son, and I will be forever thankful to her. When my son was diagnosed with autism at age 3, I didn’t know what his future would hold. Our family was in crisis, and we were all afraid for his future. My son has since learned to drive a car, go out on his own, make his own friends, join sports teams, and earned his Eagle scout honor at age 16! His tutor has been instrumental in his ability to become independent and has opened the door for him to have a future that he can be in control of.”*
  - This tutor began working with this student as an aide. She eventually became a licensed BCBA in 2020.
- Curriculum tailored to the student’s needs. A new provider cannot just magically duplicate what another provider has established.
  - A visually impaired math tutor who works miracles with a nonverbal ASP student teaching pre-calculus, and a profoundly dyslexic student in Algebra.  
*Parent recommendations attached.*
- NCTS also provides tutors certified in proprietary Science of Reading instruction for students needing reading remediation.
  - *“The tutor for our student is not located nearby, and if we lose the ability to work with this tutor, then we have to start all over, \*again\*, with another tutor. The student’s current tutor has been \*PHENOMENAL\* and has helped the student progress more than any other tutor, and in a shorter amount of time. I would go so far as to say that if my student could no longer work with this tutor, it would be detrimental to their progress, which is especially critical as they enter their senior year next fall (2024) and start applying to colleges.”*
- Each provider has their own fee schedule. The differences in fees may substantially change the quantity and frequency of services.
  - *“My son is making progress in his education and confident in his abilities since receiving remote services.”*

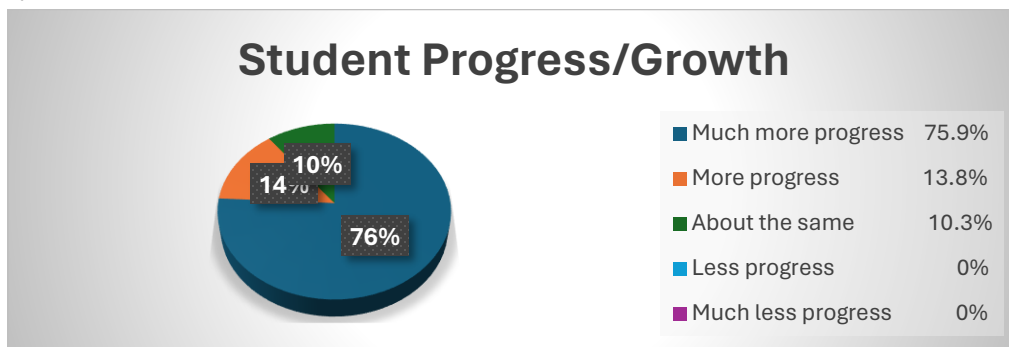
- Medically fragile students cannot safely and effectively meet with a tutor even in their own homes. This is their least restrictive environment.
- Virtual services may be best for the mental health or sensory needs of a student.
  - *“My son, due to his Autism needs remote services. He thrives on remote learning that provides a calming learning experience. He has had no regression from summer break to the 2023-2024 school year, which is a first. He has hit educational milestones he has previously not been able to attain.”*
- Some students live an hour or more from a provider.
  - *“Time. It would not be possible to have enough sessions per week to be effective if we had to meet at a location other than home or school. In a student body of 500, no other student has the diagnosis or treatment that my daughter requires. She can not get the required help at school. If our tutor met her at school, the time spent driving there would be at the exclusion of other students that she is able to help via zoom. If we were to drive to our tutor it would add two hours of commute to our daily routine. Simply not possible.”*
- Specially trained tutors meet students’ needs.
  - *“Best providers we have found are remote.”*
- Students will be deprived of working with phenomenal educators due to the tutors’ own disabilities: medically fragile, visually impaired, limited mobility.

Answers from 29 respondents to the questions:

- **What are the disadvantages of remote services?** (short answer)



- **How does the growth and progress of your student in a remote environment compare to in-person?**



A permanent provision of virtual academic services by licensed Ohio educators will ensure equitable access to quality education, for students participating in the Autism and JPSN Scholarships. It will also secure universal School Choice for Ohio families.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Sincerely,

Linnea Smith

Sent: Wednesday, June 23, 2021 12:27 PM  
To: Linnea Smith  
Subject: Recommendation

To Whom It May Concern-

We have had the good fortune to have [tutor] work with our daughter, as her math tutor for the past seven months. [Tutor] met weekly with [student], over Zoom, to help her understand concepts and work through problems for her eighth-grade Algebra class.

[Tutor ] was always on time for their Thursday afternoon sessions, and was extremely accommodating when it came to changes in schedule. He was always willing to reschedule to an alternate day and time if [student] had a test earlier in the week. He was unfailingly cheerful during the session and provided continual, positive reinforcement to [student], even when she struggled through a problem or did not understand a concept. [Tutor] was always willing to step through a problem again, and even sent follow up emails for [student] when a topic was particularly troublesome.

When [student] initially began working with [tutor], he asked to contact her Algebra teacher so that he could obtain a copy of the syllabus to understand what was being covered. He was always prepared for his time with [student], and his ability to recall the entire problem as he walked [student] through it was nothing short of impressive.

Finally, [tutor] was able to explain numerous concepts (e.g., radicals) in a way that made sense to [student]; something that her in-person Algebra teacher could not always do. We greatly appreciated [tutor's] energy and his approach to learning, and are grateful for everything he did as her tutor.

Sincerely,  
Parent

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:43 PM  
To: Linnea Smith  
Subject: Recommendation

Hello Ms. Smith,

I hope this email finds you well. Summer is coming to a close and a new school year is upon us. I want to reflect upon this past year and how [tutor] has helped my son tremendously. I am so glad I decided to go to online and having the pleasure of meeting [tutor]. I was very hesitant at first and was so pleasantly surprised. [Tutor] is very caring and diligent in his teaching. We love how he uses the whiteboard to walk through the problem step by step while explaining. This has been a game changer for [student]. When [student] has questions or doesn't understand, [tutor] steps back and addresses it wholeheartedly and thoroughly.

I am also amazed at [tutor] keeping me in the loop on [student's] progress and our collaboration on curriculum. I truly appreciate [tutor] and highly recommend him to other families. Just don't make his schedule load high as we want to keep him and have first priority!

Sincerely,  
Parent