

Tamela Dutcher
Testimony Regarding H.B. 110
Date of testimony: May 4, 2021

Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for this wonderful opportunity to provide interested party testimony regarding House Bill 110. I wanted to be sure that the members of the committee who are making the important decisions about how to fund our public schools, heard the perspective of a parent.

My name is Dr. Tamela Dutcher. I live in Delaware, Ohio. I am a parent who has chosen to send my daughter to a full-time online public school, or an eSchool. I placed my daughter in a private Catholic preschool and kindergarten. At the time she was proficiently reading and was in the 98th percentile of reading and math. I was told she would be bored if I did not ensure a rigorous educational program. She started attending the Ohio virtual Academy, OHVA, in the first grade and plans to stay until graduating high school. My daughter is currently in the seventh grade and is soaring academically. She was able to take her first college credit class this year and already has three semester credits towards college.

My daughter's school gives her the flexibility to engage in an eclectic routine of activities. I assure you that my daughter and other online school students don't just sit in front of a computer all day. My daughter is a prime example that the one size fits all approach no longer works when it comes to education. All families should have the right to choose a learning environment that best meets their child's needs.

Public eSchools, like the one my daughter attends, are public charter schools. They are real public schools with real students and real teachers. All public school students deserve equal funding no matter what type of public school they go to. I request that this committee ensures equal funding between charter schools and traditional school districts. Also, please make sure that online charters have access to additional types of funding such as aid for economically disadvantaged students. A child's education should not be limited by anything especially not their socioeconomic status or where they live.

Public eSchools are not exempt from other costs that brick and mortar schools incur such as school counselors, psychologists, special education, and other state required services. As a doctor of psychology I understand how important those services are. They should be made available to all students who need them, and not limited by inadequate funding.

eSchools also have other expenses that brick and mortar schools don't have, like renting facilities for students to take standardized tests. The expenses might be different, but they are

still expenses. Public online schools should NOT receive less in funding simply because the type of expenses associated with this type of learning are different from those of a brick & mortar school.

All I am asking is that you fund my child equally to all other public school students.

Further, if charter schools are to be funded directly and no longer deducted from traditional districts' state funding, it is imperative that public charter schools are protected from a line item veto. It would not be fair to my daughter for her chosen public school to be "line itemed" out of existence due to the political whims of a governor, especially with no opportunity for us to have any say. Please protect my daughter's school from being a political casualty.

I do understand that there is no such thing as a politics free issue, especially education and school choice. I have heard many politicians try to condemn full time online public schools based on the mixed results from online learning that many students have been forced to do during the pandemic. That's why before I leave today, I feel that it's very important that I, as a parent, make it very clear to you that here is a huge difference between full-time online public charter schools and the crisis education provided by most traditional public school districts during the pandemic.

First, my daughter and other eSchool students didn't miss out on any educational material due to the pandemic. When I talk to friends and family members that have been subjected to the crisis curriculum offered by traditional public schools, I am shocked by the lack of new rigorous material being taught. Much of the material was just a review of information provided prior to the pandemic. I know traditional public schools have done the best they can to provide an education for their students and for the most part they have done a good job considering the circumstances. I just want to make sure that you understand that there is a difference between what that experience was, and what a full-time online education is. Please don't judge full-time public online schools by the mixed results we're seeing coming out of the pandemic online learning.

In closing, I want to ask again that you fund all public school students equally; make sure that online charters have access to additional types of funding such as aid for economically disadvantaged students; and protect the school that we've chosen for my daughter, and others like it, from a possible line-item veto.

I want to thank the chair and members of this committee for the opportunity to address you today. I want to thank the Senate for their past support of school choice and charter schools. I'll ask each of you to please trust parents like me to know what is best for our children.