

Date: Feb. 25, 2021
Neutral Testimony for SB 235

Chairperson Baumgardner and Esteemed Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am testifying today as a student in remote education at the Olathe Public School District. I am a freshman at Olathe North in the Distinguished Scholars program. Please know, all of us hope for a return to normalcy and want to safely get back to school as we have missed being in person. The reason I'm here though, is I don't want people to fall into the false narrative that "all our students are failing." I know I've heard that line as well as other similar ones in the media, etc. mentioned in regard to virtual learning.

I have been remote since the beginning of the school year. While it has been different, it doesn't mean it has been impossible and it certainly hasn't been a failure. Obviously, being in person for education is likely optimal. However, the fact of the matter is we are in a pandemic that requires things be done differently. I will tell you I have seen our teachers going above and beyond to connect with students, engage us in conversation in class, and educate us. I also recognize our educators have been spending long hours working to do things differently as they were not trained to teach in a virtual format, all while schedules have changed throughout the year. At the end of the first semester, we were given the ability to change our mode of learning; in other words we could switch from on-line to in-person or vice-versa. I choose to stay remote for many reasons including consistency of format but also because I loved my teachers who have been doing a great job in this new mode of instruction. My siblings (one who is a senior and high school and the other an 8th grader in middle school) also elected to stay on-line for some of the same reasons.

There are things that I consider a benefit from on-line school: I can quickly and privately ask questions of the teacher through the on-line chat, I don't have to

literally run from one class to another during breaks, classes are very complete and coherent because virtual requires a great deal of prep work by the teachers.

I recognize on-line may not work for some; likewise, in person is a struggle for certain students. There are many different situations due to a very diverse student body. Our schedules have been switched several times this year and we have recently achieved some needed consistency with on-line education. Continual switching makes things more difficult.

In closing, I request that you don't refer to this as a "lost year." We are growing, learning, and ultimately, surviving a pandemic. I would ask that the state work to get us back to school safely and that whatever the format of learning that is needed/utilized, the state fully fund our public schools.

Respectfully,
Madeline Holscher
Student, Freshman Olathe School District