

RE: Senate Bill 362 – Primary and Secondary Virtual Schools – Oppose

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My name is Kareem Otey and my daughter Koryn Otey is in the ESMEC Blended Virtual Program for the 8th grade in Dorchester County, MD. My daughter, who has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder since she was 4, has a very difficult time focusing in the classroom with the other 20+ kids trying to learn. Any noise or movement in the classroom is a distraction. We have used several different types of medication, and although her focus issues seem to be subsiding, it will never go away. During Koryn's 7th grade year in 2020-21 year when school switched to fully virtual with live instruction, we noticed the level of work Koryn was able to complete was very high. We were able to limit the distractions and her focus improved tremendously. She was able to follow along with the daily lessons and she was actively participating because she knew the answers. She went from B's, C's, and D's to straight A's. With her new success it was a huge decision whether we would homeschool Koryn or send her back to school for her 8th grade year. Then we were presented with the Blended Virtual Program. After much discussion, we decided that we would enroll Koryn in the Blended Virtual Program since we thought it would be similar to the previous virtual school year and we are not disappointed.

The ESMEC Blended Virtual Program is amazing. Koryn attends all her classes for 45 minutes each and then has a self-paced assignment program that she follows. The due dates are pre planned so that she can stay on task and know exactly what needs to be turned in and when. With the extended time feature in her 504 Education Plan the built-in extended assignment/ test time is already built into the program so that she can complete at her own pace. She is also able to get up and move around while still completing work and listening to instruction which does not happen in the traditional classroom setting. We feel that the ESMEC Blended Virtual Program is really preparing Koryn for college readiness. She is held accountable for the work that she completes and must submit the work on her own through the virtual platform. Koryn has done a lot of research that wouldn't be required in the traditional class setting. She is also much more computer literate on google drive, using recording software, and uploading different types of documents, which most adults today struggle with. Another advantage to the Blended Virtual Program is that Koryn can still participate in all public school extracurricular activity. This school year, Koryn was able to join the Volleyball Team and participate in grade incentive assemblies. She is still a part of the school, which is wonderful. If given the opportunity, Koryn would stay in the ESMEC Blended Virtual Program for high school. Her current GPA is a 3.75 with almost all A's and a couple B's. We 100% hope the ESMEC BVP program is available next year for the success of our daughter.

Respectfully,

Kareem Falcon Otey