

Ways and Means Committee  
Wednesday, March 1, 2023  
**House Bill 985 – Virtual Schools – SUPPORT**

My name is Sharon Ramboz. A few years ago, my husband and I took into our home an unrelated precious little girl whose parents passed away. We are raising her on our retirement income and homeschooling her through Pearson Online, which is a public school. Up until last year when she became legally ours, she was a California resident and therefore could attend Connexus, a subsidiary of Pearson Online Public Schools, free of charge.

Unfortunately, Maryland is one of the ONLY states which does not offer this program for free, forcing us to pay \$377.00/month on our limited income. Ironically, the school is based in Baltimore, Maryland. At this point, we are going to be forced to move to Virginia to continue. This is not fair. We are heartbroken that we may have to give up our home of over 30 years and move to another state because quality virtual learning is not an option.

You may argue that our county does offer a non-profit option and yes, I spoke with the Superintendent in charge and was horrified at the difference in the education she receives now in comparison to what the county has to offer. It definitely adheres to the old adage: “you get what you pay for.” The online non-profit public school Maryland offers was not as organized, and when I addressed our daughter’s dyslexia and learning needs, I was advised she would have to have an IEP. The state’s online school only offers extra help for an hour at the end of the day, as opposed to her current online school where she has the ability to connect with her teachers at any time by phone, text and/or online when she has trouble in a subject and needs extra help to understand.

Both are Maryland public schools. The difference is that the county’s is only two years old and born out of necessity due to Covid. Connexus has the experience, is more organized and has been incredible in building up her self-esteem, something she previously lacked. Therefore, we are faced with switching to the free online school the county offers, thus trading a better educational experience to save money, or moving to another state to continue the excellent education she has been receiving for the past three years. This should not be an issue and is not fair to have to make this choice. As a taxpayer we are paying twice – to support the public schools and to finance our daughter’s education.

Our child is a thriving straight A student in an online public school that has addressed her individual needs and has given her confidence. Do we risk taking our child and putting her into a program that doesn’t even come close to meeting her needs because our state is the one who does not want to support anything except non-profit, or move? Obviously, our child comes first, and we are heartbroken to give up our home because our state does not seem to care about anything but saving money instead of our child’s education.

For these reasons, I am pleading with you to pass this bill, so we can remain in our home and not be forced to move to Virginia or another state to meet our daughter’s needs.

Most respectfully and sincerely,

Sharon Ramboz  
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