

HB1105 – Virtual Learning

Submitted by Shannay Witte

I am providing testimony to oppose HB 1105.

I was a classroom teacher in a brick-and-mortar school from 1989 to 2023. I started working for NDCDE as an adjunct in 2007 and transitioned to full time in August of 2023. I have had 35 years of face-to-face teaching experience and 17 years of online teaching experience.

One of the changes I oppose is that students may need to meet eligibility requirements to take NDCDE courses. I have had many students who, because of being able to take online courses in subjects their school could not offer, have gone on to very lucrative and exciting careers in those areas. Online education opens doors to subjects that students often do not have access to due to limitations at their school or on their time. No student should be denied access to opportunities that could be life changing. If the eligibility requirements are based on their level of achievement in other subject areas, it is not necessarily indicative of their ability to excel in a course they are passionate about.

The second change that I oppose is that schools can require legal guardians to pay for their student's enrollment if they should fail the course. I feel that this action will not increase students' propensity to successfully complete courses as much as it would discriminate against families with limited financial ability who would be unwilling to risk that possible financial burden. Many of our students are those who have struggled in the regular classroom and need the options that online courses provide and the deterrent of possibly having to pay for a course only compounds the multifaceted problems these students face.

Having worked in a rural school district for 34 years, I understand the struggles that schools face with allocating education funds equitably, but paying for NDCDE courses is a direct educational benefit to students, not an auxiliary function or frivolity. Providing equitable opportunities to all students regardless of their past achievements or financial ability is an important part of providing quality education for all students in our state. NDCDE provides high quality, rigorous curriculum that is taught by experienced, qualified teachers to meet students' needs regardless of their background or location. NDCDE strives to supplement students' learning and be partners with the local schools in making education in all subjects accessible for every student.