

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee:

My name is Taylor Koster, and I am here today to testify against the passage of House Bill 1172. I am speaking from personal experience, as I had the opportunity to benefit from online education during high school. The impact it had on my academic achievements, professional development, and mental well-being has been extremely valuable, and I believe it provides a unique and valuable option for many students.

I've heard concerns from administrators and other representatives about some students using online courses as an easy way out, to avoid teachers, or even to cheat the system. However, my experience was completely different, and I believe these concerns do not reflect the reality for all students. I hope by sharing my story, the committee will better understand the true value of virtual education and how it can serve as an important tool for many students.

Throughout high school, online education allowed me to accomplish goals that would not have been possible with traditional schooling. Each summer, I began taking online courses to get ahead academically, which ultimately enabled me to graduate a semester early. This was a crucial step, as it allowed me to work additional hours, save more money, and better prepare for my transition to college. By my senior year, I was almost a full-time online student, taking only one in-person class and completing the rest of my coursework virtually.

The flexibility of an online schedule gave me the ability to manage my time more efficiently. It required discipline and time management, but it also allowed me to be more productive. As a fast-paced learner, I was able to focus on academics without the added burden of simply waiting for class to end. Instead of sitting idle in the classroom after finishing my work, I could use that time to further my knowledge, gain valuable experience in the workplace,

and engage in activities beneficial to my well-being. While doing this, I maintained the same 3.9 GPA I had in my in-person classes throughout my online coursework.

In addition to the academic and professional benefits, online education played a significant role in improving my mental health. The flexibility allowed me to better balance school, work, and personal life, creating a healthier and more purposeful routine. This balance gave me a greater sense of control over my time and goals, leaving me feeling more confident and motivated.

Because of my success with online education in high school, I continued to pursue this format in college. The flexibility of online courses made it possible for me to accept a promotion to shift manager at my workplace—an opportunity I wouldn't have been able to pursue with traditional school hours. The ability to balance work and school has been essential to my continued success, and it all started with the opportunities I had in high school.

Online education offers students the ability to personalize their learning experience, making it more adaptable to their individual needs and goals. However, the revisions proposed in HB 1172, specifically lines 11-14, would have prevented someone like me from having my online courses paid for. From my perspective, and hopefully yours, I am a success story of virtual education, and I know that my experience was incredibly valuable. Taking away this option would be a serious setback for students like me, as well as for those who may not be able to afford online courses without the support that is currently available.

I hear the concerns regarding virtual education, but if the true priority is student success and not simply the distribution of per-pupil funding, I strongly urge you to seek alternatives. Rather than removing this valuable resource, we should explore solutions that ensure all students, regardless of financial circumstances, continue to have access to the tools they need to

succeed. Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee that concludes my testimony and I am happy to answer any questions.