

Senate Education Committee

October 22, 2019

Written Testimony Respectfully submitted by

Dr. John Chandler

Chief Executive Officer

PA Virtual Charter School





October 22, 2019

To: Senator Langerholc and the members of the Senate Education Committee

My name is Dr. John Chandler. I currently serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School. I began my career in education in Michigan, serving as a public school teacher, a principal at all grade levels, and as a traditional superintendent for over 11 years.

In 2001, PA Virtual Charter School was one of the first public, cyber charter schools to open in Pennsylvania. PA Virtual Charter School prides itself on accountability, transparency and being in full compliance with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and all government agencies to ensure all public school students, taxpayers and stakeholders have access to all pertinent information as requested.

Our approximately 2,000 students are more diverse and have a higher economically disadvantaged rate than the student population of Pennsylvania as a whole. We have over 200 staff members, 100% of whom are part of the PSERS retirement system. Our teachers, who are awesome and with whom we have a great relationship, are union members affiliated with the PSEA.

Most importantly, we are a public school!

In compliance with the request made by Senator Langerholc's office, I would like to respectfully submit the following information:

I. Number of students enrolled.

As of the October 1, 2019 school snapshot data reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, PA Virtual serves 2080 students. PA Virtual has an open enrollment policy. As a result, the number of students may fluctuate throughout the course of the school year.

II. Number of school districts served.

As of the October 1, 2019 school snapshot data reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, PA Virtual currently enrolls students from 357 of Pennsylvania's 501 school districts.

III. Number of students in regular education and special education.

As of the October 1, 2019 school snapshot data reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, PA Virtual currently serves 1711 Regular Education Students and 369 students with special education needs and an active Individual Education Plan.

IV. Cost per student in regular education and cost per student in special education.

For financial reporting purposes, the cost of education is determined using the Average Daily Membership (ADM) according to the August 2019 billing cycle. The same data is used in support of our publicly available financial information for 2018-2019. The cost for PA Virtual to educate a Regular Education student is \$12,702.08 (ADM 1766.16). The cost for PA Virtual to educate a Special Education student is \$27,731.64 (ADM 372.80).



Both rates exceed the average tuition rate received for both populations of students. We are currently using a portion of our reserves (fund equity) to make up this difference. We plan to make changes that will lead us to a balanced budget and avoid having to further use reserves.

V. Attendance policy for students.

PURPOSE

The Board of Trustees (Board) of Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School (PA Virtual) recognizes that attendance is an important factor in educational success, and the Board supports a comprehensive approach to identify and address attendance issues.

The Board shall establish and enforce attendance requirements, in accordance with applicable laws and state administrative regulations.

POLICY

I. Definitions

Compulsory school age - the period of a child's life from the time the child's parents/guardians elect to have the child enter school, and which shall be no later than six (6) years of age until the child reaches eighteen (18) years of age. The term does not include a child who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.

Truant - having incurred three (3) or more non-consecutive school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance.

Habitually truant - six (6) or more non-consecutive school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance.

Person in parental relation - a custodial biological or adoptive parent, a noncustodial biological or adoptive parent, guardian of the person of a child, and/or person with whom a child lives and who is acting in a parental role of a child. "Person in parental relation" shall not include any county agency or person acting as an agent of the county agency in the jurisdiction of a dependent child as defined by law.

School attendance improvement conference - a conference where the child's absence and reasons for the absences are examined in an effort to improve attendance, which may or may not conclude with additional services.

School-based or community-based attendance improvement program - a program designed to improve school attendance by seeking to identify and address the underlying reasons for a child's absences. The term may include an educational assignment in an alternative education program, provided the program does not include a program for disruptive youth established pursuant to Article XIX-C of the Pennsylvania Public School Code.

Learning Management System - the software application utilized by the school for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, and delivery of educational courses.

II. General Guidelines



PA Virtual is responsible for enforcing the compulsory school attendance laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and for properly recording student attendance and maintaining student records. The PA Virtual Attendance Policy is designed to promote maximum academic achievement, develop time management skills, and foster success in the online environment. To be considered “in attendance” at PA Virtual parents (learning coaches) have to ensure that students log-in daily to Blackboard (daily attendance). In addition students attending synchronous classes also have to attend their scheduled, teacher-led instructional classes (class attendance).

III. Daily Attendance

Daily attendance at Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School is required. Parents/ legal guardians are to ensure that the attendance of the student(s) is recorded daily and that absences are communicated to school personnel within three days of the absence. Three or more unexcused absences will result in the student being placed on an attendance improvement plan. Students are required to log into Blackboard daily for attendance and attend all synchronous virtual class(es) for which he or she may be scheduled.

A. Virtual Class Attendance

To be marked present in a class students who are required to be in a virtual class session are required to attend for the entire class period. Students who accumulate unexcused class absences may be required to enter into an attendance improvement agreement. The attendance improvement agreement is intended to help students improve their class attendance.

B. Excused/Lawful Absence

For purposes of this policy, the following conditions or situations constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:

- Illness or health-related reasons.
- Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts in any state, commonwealth or territory.
- Quarantine.
- Family emergency.
- Recovery from accident.
- Required court attendance.
- Death in family.
- Observance of a religious holiday observed by bona fide religious group, upon prior written parental request.
- Non-school sponsored educational tours or trips, if the following conditions are met:
 - The parent/guardian submits a written request for excusal prior to the absence.
 - The student's participation has been approved by the school principal or designee.
- College or postsecondary institution visit, with prior approval.
- Other urgent reasons. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance.



Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School may limit the number and duration of non-school sponsored educational tours or trips and college or postsecondary institution visits for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school year.

C. Parental Notice of Absence

Absences shall be treated as unlawful until the district receives a written excuse explaining the absence, which must be submitted within three (3) school days of the absence.

A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed medical practitioner.

D. Unexcused/Unlawful Absence

For purposes of this policy, absences which do not meet the criteria indicated above shall be considered an unexcused/unlawful absence.

An out-of-school suspension may not be considered an unexcused absence.

E. Notification from School to Parent

School staff shall provide notice to the person in parental relation upon each incident of unexcused absence.

IV. Enforcement of Compulsory Attendance Requirements

A. Truant Student

When a student has been absent for three (3) days during the current school year without a lawful excuse, school staff shall provide notice to the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student within ten (10) school days of the student's third unexcused absence.

The notice shall:

- Be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the person in parental relation;
- Include a description of the consequences if the student becomes habitually truant; and
- When transmitted to a person who is not the biological or adoptive parent, also be provided to the child's biological or adoptive parent, if the parent's mailing address is on file with the school and the parent is not precluded from receiving the information by court order.
- The notice may include the offer of a School Attendance Improvement Conference.

If the student incurs additional unexcused absences after issuance of the notice and a School Attendance Improvement Conference was not previously held, school staff shall offer a School Attendance Improvement Conference.

A child is not considered truant if he/she is absent from school due to not meeting the immunization, exemption or provisional admission requirements of the Department of Health, at 28 Pa. Code Chapter 23, Subchapter C (relating to immunization), or the student has not received from the CEO or his/her designee a medical or



religious exemption from immunization under 28 Pa. Code § 23.84 (relating to exemption from immunization).
22 Pa. Code. Chapter 11.20.

B. School Attendance Improvement Conference

School staff shall notify the person in parental relation in writing and by telephone of the date and time of the School Attendance Improvement Conference.

The purpose of the School Attendance Improvement Conference is to examine the student's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services.

The following individuals shall be invited to the School Attendance Improvement Conference:

- The student.
- The student's person in parental relation.
- Other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource.
- Appropriate school personnel.
- Recommended service providers.

Neither the student nor the person in parental relation shall be required to participate, and the School Attendance Improvement Conference shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference.

The outcome of the School Attendance Improvement Conference shall be documented in a written School Attendance Improvement Plan. The Plan shall be retained in the student's file. A copy of the Plan shall be provided to the person in parental relation, the student and the student's school district of residence.

C. Student is Habitually Truant

When a student under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, school staff:

May refer the student to:

- A school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
- The local children and youth agency
- May file a citation against the parent/guardian of a habitually truant child under fifteen (15) years of age in a magisterial district court. The venue of the filing shall be based on the location of the school in which the child is enrolled or shall be enrolled.

When a student fifteen (15) years of age or older is habitually truant, school staff may:

- Refer the student to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
- File a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the student or the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.

School staff may refer a student who is fifteen (15) years of age or older to the local children and youth agency, if the student continues to incur additional unexcused absences after being referred to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, or if the student refuses to participate in such program.



Regardless of age, when school staff refer a habitually truant student to the local children and youth agency or collaborate with the resident school district to file a citation with the appropriate judge, school staff shall provide verification that the school held a School Attendance Improvement Conference.

Students that are absent from school for ten (10) or more consecutive days without appropriate documentation will be removed from Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School's active rolls unless one of the following occurred:

- The district has been provided with evidence that absence may be legally excused;
- Compulsory attendance prosecution has been or is being pursued.

Children who are habitually truant from school while subject to compulsory school attendance are subject to an assessment to determine if there is a need for general protective services. Children will not be referred to the county children and youth agency for assessment as possibly needing services until after Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School has made a formal effort to involve the family and child in resolving the cause of the truant behavior.

A student who is eligible under IDEA shall be afforded all due process rights before being removed from active roles at PA Virtual.

D. Special Needs and Accommodations

If a truant or habitually truant student may qualify as a student with a disability, and require special education services or accommodations, the Director of Special Education or designee shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

For students with disabilities who are truant or habitually truant, the student's Principal and the Director of Special Education or designee shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

No student, whether married or unmarried, who is otherwise eligible to attend the Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School, shall be denied an educational program solely because of pregnancy, childbirth, pregnancy related disabilities, or actual or potential parenthood; nor shall a pregnant student under the age of 17 be excused from the requirements of the Compulsory Attendance Statute solely for reasons of her pregnancy or maternity.

A student who requests that she not participate in a regular or extracurricular program of Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School because of her pregnancy shall be excused from such program upon providing a report from a qualified physician that outlines the reason for the excusal, the recommendation for excusal, and the anticipated duration for the excusal.

A student who is absent from School due to pregnancy or parenting should be allowed to reenter the School in the same manner as any other student whose non-attendance is a result of an excused absence or a temporary disability. A student over compulsory school age who leaves school due to pregnancy or parenting demands without achieving a high school diploma shall be allowed to reenter school up until the age of 21, as any other student is permitted.

E. Discipline



The district shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment, or transfer for truant behavior.

TO THE EXTENT THAT ANYTHING IN THIS POLICY COULD BE CONSTRUED TO CONFLICT WITH THE SCHOOL'S CHARTER AND/OR APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS, THE SCHOOL'S CHARTER AND/OR APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS CONTROL.

Legal

24 P.S. 1326

Act 138 of 2016

42 Pa. C.S.A. 6302

22 PA Code Chapter 12

22 PA Code Chapter 11

VI. Time spent in live classrooms vs. time spent watching recorded lessons.

The PA Virtual instructional model is designed to assist each student in reaching academic success. It approaches teaching and learning for each student by partnering with parents and students to determine how to best meet the needs of each and every child.

PA Virtual's academic program supports each child's unique academic needs by combining the structure and flexibility he or she needs with the support of PA-certified teachers, in age-appropriate learning communities.

PA Virtual incorporates three learning communities also known as schools: the elementary school, the middle school, and the high school.

PA Virtual students access learning in one of two ways: by asynchronous or synchronous instructional method. Students in asynchronous classes have a customized schedule and learn in a self-directed environment, supervised by teachers and supported by parents (learning coaches). Students in synchronous classes attend live classes directed by teachers. They join other students, across the Commonwealth, in a virtual classroom.

The virtual classroom is organized in an electronic platform, known as Blackboard Collaborate. In synchronous classes, teachers and students interact by using emoticons, microphones, instant messaging, webcams, and other online tools.

The Learning Coach is expected to be "the eyes and ears" of the school in the home learning environment, whether students participate in asynchronous or synchronous instruction. This means parents ensure students have logged-in appropriately to the online school, attend synchronous classes as required, are engaged in learning, complete all academic assignments, and collaborate with teachers as necessary. The involvement and support of the Learning Coach varies based on the age and the need of the student and relies heavily on open lines of communication.

As a result, the percent of time students spend online with a live teacher varies, and is heavily predicated on the needs of each individual student.



VII. How the school is organized and if they use an EMS provider.

PA Virtual is a public, cyber charter school led by a Board of Trustees. PA Virtual's Board of Trustees is composed of parents and community members who are passionate about providing educational options to students in Pennsylvania. The Board provides oversight for PA Virtual and acts in trust for the taxpayers of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The PA Virtual Board of Trustees holds regularly scheduled meeting as is required by law.

In compliance with the Sunshine Law, Board meetings are advertised in a local newspaper, the School's Academic Calendar, the PA Virtual website, and within the school's Learning Management System. Board meetings are open to the public, and members of the PA Virtual community are encouraged to attend. The minutes for Board meetings are made available on PA Virtual's public website or by writing the Administrative Office in King of Prussia.

PA Virtual employs 210 professionals from across Pennsylvania.

See attached Organizational Chart for more details.

VIII. Number of faculty, as a percentage, participating in PSERS.

100% of PA Virtual's faculty and staff participate in PSERS, including both part time and seasonal staff members.

Pennsylvania's Public Cyber Charter Schools Offer a Comprehensive Educational Opportunity

Operating a full-time cyber program is not inexpensive. Please see the article that I've included regarding the Quakertown School District realizing they were losing \$700,000 per year.

At PA Virtual, we recognize that a high quality academic program requires a variety of structures, programs, and supports to ensure we meet each of our student's individual needs. There are costs associated with each of these items.

- High quality technology including a laptop, printer/scanner, and software
- Internet reimbursement
- Robust online curriculum with additional hard copy books and materials
- Orientation to cyber school program staffed by certified teachers
- Ongoing parent support, engagement, and education programming
- Guidance Counselors
- Pupil Health Department including School Nursing staff
- Family Support Coordinators to assist with attendance, home visits, technology troubleshooting, and social activities and outings
- Technology support staff available from 6:00am - 10:00pm
- After school tutoring programs for all students
- Full continuum of special education services to support all students regardless of their special education needs



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- A low (18:1) student-to-teacher ratio. Note. PA Virtual's teachers are members of PSEA and 100% of our staff participate in PSERS

As the chief executive officer of a public cyber charter school, a parent, and a voter, I urge this legislative committee to encourage all public school entities to collaborate toward advancing the educational opportunities for all public school students. Education has changed. Our economic drivers have changed. We need to work together to ensure our Pennsylvania public school students have the skills to be successful in tomorrow's world.

It is true, that the now 20 year old charter school law may need some adjustment. And we welcome the opportunity to sit down at the table with all stakeholders to determine the best method of improving the educational opportunities for all public school students. But the original spirit of the Charter School Law encouraged competition to ensure all parents, regardless of their resident zip code, had the opportunity to choose the best educational model for their student and family. Competition is at the heart of the improvements we have witnessed across the public school sector. We cannot seek to eliminate it or our students will be left behind.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

- **Addenda:**
- PA Virtual Parent Testimonies
- Quakertown looks to close two schools, furlough 50 staff to make ends meet
- PA Virtual Organizational Chart
- Accountability and Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools
- Costs of High Quality Public Cyber Charter Schools
- Pennsylvania's Public Cyber Charter Schools; Facts vs Myths
- Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools Welcome Accountability



October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Kim and Jeff

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

PA Virtual Charter School has served our family since 2010. As our elected officials, have you taken the time to educate yourselves about our model of education? Well my family did back ten years ago when our autistic son's special education teacher was concerned for his safety going forward into the brick and mortar public middle school. We did our due diligence and explored multiple options for our son. We came across PA Virtual and decided that we could make the commitment for our son. It was a wise decision and should be a wiser decision for you to make time to learn more about our educational model.

Since our local brick and mortar public school district was becoming more and more unsafe, we brought our neuro-typical son into the PA Virtual fold as well. Both of our boys have thrived in this model. There is no BULLYING, only Acceptance and INCLUSION. Both boys study Calculus, honors level coursework while maintaining high levels of social interaction within the Charter School as well as in our community through sports and volunteerism. They take on leadership roles while at PA Virtual and do Community Service with the help of the amazing staff and their equally wonderful peers.

Our eldest son, Peirce, finished a year early from high school while attending PA Virtual. He spoke at his graduation ceremony in front of 500 people, eloquently speaking to his challenges and successes in having Autism Spectrum Disorder. He earned the Math Award for his high perseverance in his studies, particularly his AP Calculus course. He decided to attend Bucks County Community College for their two-year HONORS@Bucks Program and studied Pre-Professional Psychology; he earned Summa Cum Laude at graduation this past May. He was elected PHI THETA KAPPA President by his peers and was able to transfer this past August to a 4-year program. Here were his acceptances:

William and Mary College

Marist College (Presidential Scholarship \$25k)

University of Rochester (Dean's Scholarship \$14k)

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Leadership Merit Scholarship \$21.5k)

High Point University (PTK/ GPA Scholarship \$8k)

Champlain College (Merit Scholarship \$10K)

He chose to attend Rensselaer Polytech because of its amazing reputation and its brand new major: Psychological Science Program. This major explores big data and Artificial Intelligence through statistical-based research. It is the PERFECT major for him, since he fell in love with Psychology and Statistics during his senior year elective coursework while attending PA Virtual Charter School.

Our second son, Conor, is neuro-typical but is right on the coat-tails of his big brother. He is also an accelerated learner and is taking Calculus as a 15-year old sophomore. He currently has an 88% in the class and that is his lowest grade this semester. He has started crew with a local rowing club here on the Delaware River. He is already on the Varsity youth team after only 6 weeks learning from scratch. He is



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6'3" and very soft spoken. His dream is to row for Dartmouth. He plans to attend Dartmouth's summer row camp and our family plans a visit to New Hampshire during our boys' spring break in March 2020.

I am writing out of sheer frustration for my children's right and privilege to be educated in the BEST, most productive and successful way. Pennsylvania has voted and allowed this right and privilege for 20 years and it has benefitted thousands of families and its children. We would love for you to meet our sons and let them SHOW YOU why our model of education is necessary and vital for some families. Are you willing to learn why this is important for us as a family and not take away our right to learn? As a family we took the time and countless years as Parent coaches, and even as a Volunteer Parent Ambassador (mom) creating amazing children, as well as helping other families in their educational journey, so that they will go out into the world and positively contribute. Will you?

Thank you,

Kim and Jeff
Proud PA Virtual Parents



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Kenneth

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

In the year 2016, I was diagnosed with an auto-immune disease known as dysautonomia. In essence, this disorder made me feel fatigued and nauseous on a daily basis. Seemingly mundane tasks such as getting outside of the house, sitting in a car, or even something as simple as walking became their own monumental challenges. Brick and mortar schools were not an option for me at this time, and I had to receive tutoring at home in order to get my education for eighth grade, and partially for ninth grade. I transferred back to a traditional public school halfway through my freshman year. After moving to Pennsylvania, and after an incredibly strenuous month or so, we just realized that brick and mortar schooling was not sustainable or realistic.

After just barely getting through 9th grade, we realized that we had to find an alternative, which is when we found PA Virtual. This school made getting my education seem feasible and achievable. Instead of having to attend school every other day and only for half days, I was able to get in full days of school on a daily basis. This style of learning always requires hard work, but never feels impossible. I would not have been able to continue getting my education in an effective manner if we didn't find PA Virtual, and I think it is extremely vital that other students are afforded the same opportunity to be able to receive education, even in difficult circumstances.

Sincerely,

Kenneth

A Grateful PA Virtual Student



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Allan

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I am writing this testimony to highlight some of the many reasons that my son is thriving in PA Virtual. First and foremost, the traditional brick and mortar model was not a good fit for him. When he went to our local school he was evaluated by the school psychologist with a very high IQ and tested off the charts in verbal and reading comprehension but he also has ADHD. He can not sit still for long periods and is prone to outbursts. At the recommendation of the school he was accelerated a grade but he still had problems. Even with an IEP, their solution consisted of removing him from class since the teacher didn't have time to deal with him (or the IEP) on a consistent basis. He was not learning and not enjoying school. Since he started with PA Virtual he is learning and most importantly, has started to enjoy learning again. The curriculum is rigorous (more so than the traditional school) plus he is getting the behavioral support services with PA Virtual that the traditional school couldn't/wouldn't provide.

Traditional schools are fine for the 70-80% of kids who fit their model but PA Virtual (and all virtual schools) do a fantastic job of educating the kids who would be lost in the cracks of a traditional school. My tax dollars are best spent following my child and not spent at the local school where he was not given the education or services he deserved.

The teachers and administrators at PA Virtual have done a great job working with us on his education, services needed, IEP and other aspects of his education that we found challenging to do at our local school. They have worked with us every step of the way to ensure he is successful. I have no doubt the education he is receiving at PA Virtual exceeds the education he would receive at the local school. Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Allan
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Jill

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and members of the Senate Education Committee;

My name is Jill Scavincky and my husband Ernie and I have three children that attend Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School. We live in Monessen City School District and chose to pull them from their brick and mortar setting 3 years ago in the hopes that there had to be something better for them out there than the district we live in. One of our children has Autism and ADHD and his needs were not being met with our local district. Our oldest was being bullied on a daily basis and was even assaulted on the bus. I attended EVERY school board meeting, was very active in the PTA, helped with parties and field trips and tried to help make positive changes for my children as much as I could from the parent aspect. But, it was not enough. Making the leap to cyber school was the best decision for my children. They are thriving emotionally and academically. Every family should be able to make the same decision for their own kids.

PA Virtual Charter School has been an amazing school for our children. This year they are in 2nd, 4th, and 6th grades. The curriculum is leaps and bounds over what they had at our local district which does not have enough books for every child nor do they have music, art, and gym. PA Virtual has an incredibly rich curriculum and offers children all of the arts, clubs, and activities they want. The teachers and Special Education department have been amazing to partner with to ensure my child has absolutely everything they need to succeed. Being involved in my children's education has been a blessing. I know exactly what they are learning and can help them more if they need it. Pennsylvania should continue to allow parents and families to make the school choice that best fits their situation. One hundred percent of the tax money that the state allows for my children should follow them. Currently the entire amount does not follow them but if you allow additional cuts to cyber charter school funding, it will impact my child's educational opportunities. We should always strive to offer more, not take away and make do with less.

“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” -Benjamin Franklin

Sincerely,

Jill
Proud PA Virtual Parent



October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Zoe

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and members of the Senate Education Committee;

I have always known that I wanted to Homeschool my children. It was a way for us to impart our values to our children through educating them in our home on a daily basis. It was also a way to protect them at such a vulnerable time in their lives from the increasingly violent and threatening environment that some public schools have become. It has allowed them to thrive as the unique individuals they are without being forced to change under the growing pressures of their peers while still having healthy and influential relationships with friends they have made in the community through their interests. They have gained confidence as leaders in our church, and community organizations such as Boy Scouts and 4-H, and developed skills in karate and dance. Now my two oldest children have excelled in a public collegiate environment, making the Dean's list and preparing for directed studies, internships and full-time employment.

Articles such as this by Dr. Bill Harner only do more to damage School District's already tainted view of Cyber Charter Schools. It is full of financial misinformation about the funding, spending and accountability that Cyber Charters are required by the state to account for. Cyber Charter Schools are not "stealing" from districts for the students they educate. They bill the districts for their students because that district is no longer educating that student. The monies they receive for that student's education should be allocated to the entity that is providing that service. And yet, the School Districts still keep about 28% of that student's education dollars, so in essence Charter Schools save the districts money (or maybe taking from the students instead of the other way around?). But this is not communicated by those districts to the families in their district because the loss of those student's education dollars (regardless if they are attending their school or not) is sorely felt and seen as Cyber Charters "robbing" these struggling public schools. Cyber Charter schools are also accredited, public schools with charters approved by the state of Pennsylvania. They also hire certified teachers, participate in state standardized testing, and are accountable for those results. PA Virtual students have the same graduation requirements as other PA High School students, graduate with Pennsylvania State High School Diplomas, and go on to be accepted into prestigious colleges and jobs. They have access to pupil health, guidance services, extracurricular clubs, tutoring and special education services and therapy. These proposed bills: Senate Bill 34 and House Bill 526 cannot be allowed to pass.

The families like mine who choose Cyber Charter Schools as the best option for their children's education, families all over the county, would be required to use the school provided cyber school options or be charged (in addition to the tax dollars they already paid) to use the Cyber charter school of their choosing (which is a public school option). Senate Bill 34 states that "If a public school district offers a cyber-based program equal in scope and content to an existing publicly chartered cyber charter school and a student in that district attends a cyber charter school instead of the district's cyber-based program, the school district shall not be required to provide funding to pay for the student's attendance at a cyber charter school." The district's cyber-based programs are no comparison to the live daily instruction from certified teachers, ongoing, daily support and resources that most Cyber Charter Schools offer their students. Some district's cyber-based programs require a certain amount of time in the school in addition (which defeats the



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purpose of choosing education out of the school) or extra time to meet with already burdened teachers will full classrooms in their schools. Students may have the benefit of being allowed to participate in the school's extracurricular activities and sports by attending the district's charter school, (which they are lawfully supposed to afford all students in their district, Cyber charter student or not) but with the lack of daily support and oversight most of these students receive, they typically do not succeed at their cyber program and reenter the public brick and mortar school. This feeds into the narrative that all Cyber charter students under-perform. Help me to change this narrative.

Let us keep school choice an option for families across Pennsylvania!

Sincerely,

Zoe

Cyber Charter parent of 15 years



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Marcy

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I am a parent with chronic health problems and the option of online school has saved my family and my healthcare. I researched many online schools and PA Virtual Charter School allows me to give my children an excellent education and address my chronic health concerns.

I currently have severe Rheumatoid Arthritis, Anklyosing Sponylitis, Chronic Intractable Migraines as a result of attempted treatment for RA (Enbrel), and I I recently had surgery for kidney cancer. I am not always able to function Monday through Friday from dawn to dusk. Yet, Mommy being sick is not a valid excused absense for a child. I am not physically able to get my children dressed, with breakfast eaten, and lunches packed, and on a school bus early morning Mon - Fri. So in addition to chronic health problems, I will also have truancy issues for my children as well. I cannot physically do any better.

Pa Virtual Charter School allows my children to get a quality education. It removes the pressure and stress of a mother with chronic health problems to get her children educated. My house functions based upon when Mommy feels good, not upon the schedule of brick and mortar school.

I cannot fathom HOW I would be able to send my children to brick and mortar school. The option of online schooling has saved my family - much stress, grief, and quite frankly keeps my famliy together. There have been days my children, at ages 6 & 7, have wondered if Mommy is going to die. Our family deserves no more stress. My children, nor their mother, can handle brick and mortar at this point in our lives.

Sincerely,

Marcy

Parent of two PA Virtual children (grades 1st & 2nd)



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Amanda

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I chose an online school to encourage independence and individuality. PA Virtual has allowed my child to learn at his own pace and get immediate answers to questions that come as he is accessible to this one on one learning experience.

Continuing to honor parent rights to have a choice for their child's education will encourage the voice of individuality as we are all differently made, learning in different ways and in different environments. Additional cuts to Cyber Charter School Funding will harm educational opportunities in that those different learning resources and environments would be less or not offered at all.

Our tax dollars and public school funding should be following our children to ensure they all have the same encouraged opportunities in resources to reach up and instill knowledge into the adults they will become. And as mentioned above, we are all different. We thrive differently, we struggle and succeed differently, we learn differently and it all starts with choice. Having 'choice' is the essence of self awareness, knowing we have those choices are the beginning of our own discovery in knowing who we are as a country, state, family, individual and child.

Sincerely,

Amanda
PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Roberta

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I am the mother of three children, one of whom graduated from public school with honors and is now attending college. Over the years we have had some concerns with our local school. I have had issues with their learning environment (other students), the principal and concerns for their safety. My second daughter was pulled from public school two years ago after a lot of prayer, discussion, and thought. We were very thankful to have PA Virtual as an option for her. We discovered that she was behind in Math due to simply not learning it at the public school. Not only is she caught up but she is taking courses above her grade level. She is confident, motivated and feels safe in her environment.

My youngest was pulled out of public school last year. After numerous incidents with outbursts from another classmate and lack of leadership from the principal, she was afraid to go. We as a family, decided that it was time to keep her home. It took her a couple of weeks to adjust to the new schedule but she is doing fantastic. She is able to focus on what is important, she's able to learn.

In addition to their success in academics, they both are talented dancers. Their faith based studio is an important part of their spiritual and social lives, but is a bit far from home. The PA Virtual schedule allows them the time to continue their passion without missing class or affecting their schooling in anyway. We are extremely happy with our decision and love PA Virtual and what they offer. Everything from the teaching styles to field trips. My children are succeeding, developing confidence, discipline and have the motivation they didn't before. They are less stressed and more interested in school. For me as a parent, it's amazing to see the changes in them and it eases my mind to know they are safe.

Sincerely,

Roberta
Proud PA Virtual parent of 2



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Kim

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

We chose cyber school because my children who have mild special needs floundered in brick & mortar school and received little help from teachers despite having a 504 plan. Most of their needs were remedied by removing them from the chaotic surroundings of the brick & mortar setting and those that weren't met were remedied by being in the cyber classroom settings. The teachers and staff have always been extremely accommodating. I was extremely happy to find the curriculum challenging and I got to see all the things my child was doing, not just those assignments that they brought home. I was able to follow along with their work and discuss the topics with them to reinforce what they were learning. My children have both done well and one is hoping to graduate a year early. I think parents have a right to choose how and where their children are educated. The brick & mortar setting was doing my children a disservice. They deserved better and I knew there had to be a better way. Parents shouldn't have to fight for that right. It IS our right.

As is stands local school districts keep about 25% of the funds they receive to educate my children. (Tuscarora School District, Franklin County, PA.) While I understand that some of that goes towards building maintenance and upkeep, PA Virtual is clearly educating my children for less. The local district sends me letters telling me how I am doing my child a disservice by using a cyber school, yet they have set up their own cyber school. Meanwhile, they are looking to close local school buildings in our district due to a decline in student numbers. I think this clearly demonstrates a trend and the future of school options in PA. Parents want better for their kids and in a world where more and more parents are working from home, this model is growing annually. I hope that you will reconsider the funding cuts. I feel like I deserve a say in where and how my child is educated.

Sincerely,

Kim

Parent of Two Cyber School Children



October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Layla

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

My name is Layla Koon. I am fifteen years old and I am proud to be a student of PA Virtual. Four years ago, I left my local district to attend this school. I was hesitant at first, but it was the best decision I have made in my educational career. Back then, I was in sixth grade. Now, I am in tenth grade taking eleventh grade honors. I am surrounded by knowledgeable, friendly staff on a daily basis and I am fully immersed in a supportive community. I couldn't ask for anything more – PA Virtual has fulfilled everything that I was lacking at other schools.

To give a little bit of background information about me, throughout my life I have lived in three states. I have seen more than three quarters of the country. That being said, I have also experienced numerous schools. Seven, to be exact. Public, Montessori...I even dabbled in home schooling for a bit. However, I have always faced the same challenge: I absorb information like a sponge. In fifth grade, I tested into the John Hopkins Center for Talented Youth program. At the same time, my reading comprehension was at a college level in the AR system.

Needless to say, my local school district was baffled. They did not know how to handle me. Due to the fact I had never taken the state's standardized test, they were unable to place me in the STAR program (their program available to advanced students). Despite the fact my transcript revealed my stellar academic history, they placed me in regular classes and told me the equivalent of what other schools had said: "Just deal with it." The rest of the year I spent my time reviewing material I had just covered in Montana. Thus, I was severely handicapped and I did not learn anything new the rest of my fifth grade year. Instead, I spent my time drawing in notebooks and half paying attention to class.

After a disastrous first impression with the local district, my parents decided to search for other schooling alternatives for me. Contenders included paying for the John Hopkins program, going to a private school, or home schooling again (which I was not happy with after a previous experience). Finally, at the end of summer, my mom approached me with an offer. She had found a unique school. It was an online school, but I would essentially "Skype" with my teachers for classes. I was intrigued. I agreed to meet with the middle school principal and learn more about it. The school was called PA Virtual Charter School. You know the rest. I've been here for four years now and I love. But...why did I choose to stay? There are a few reasons:

1. The flexibility – By attending a virtual school, I have the ability to mold my schedule around things that interest me. Although I still need to attend classes daily, PA Virtual has been very lenient and has enabled me to do some amazing things like watch a heart surgery (through the Carnegie Stem Girls), attend leadership conferences (through 4-H), and participate in a martial art for three years (whereas in a regular school I could not attend the evening classes due to catching the bus).
2. The staff – Upon arrival to the school, I was placed in a class with a wonderful teacher! She had over twenty years of teaching experience and she knew how to engage students from across a screen. Whether it be by Bean Boozling herself, dressing up in funny costumes, or just by singing a



- song, she knew how to make my day! Over the course of four years I have had similar experiences with all of my teachers. PA Virtual is prone to finding the best and brightest and recognizes which teachers truly make the school shine.
3. The socialization – Believe it or not, PA Virtual is a great source of socialization! Each Friday our regional Family Support Coordinators try to host awesome field trips to places like the US Mint, Knoebels, and the Pittsburgh Cathedral of Learning! Students of PA Virtual also receive student emails that they can use to contact their peers to develop close bonds. Most of my friends are located on eastern side of the state. Without PA Virtual, I would not have met them.
 4. The curriculum – This is the most important reason for me. Not only did I encounter an incredible teacher upon arriving to the school, but the middle school assistant principal assured me that I would be academically challenged. She was right. My sixth grade teacher checked in with me on several occasions that year to ensure that the curriculum was tough enough for me and that I wasn't growing bored. For the first time, I was actually enjoying school because it wasn't a cake walk. I had to work for my grade. Two years later, my appreciation for the school only grew when I was approached with the offer to join a prestigious Scholars Academy (which is currently being replaced by Honors Societies). Through the Scholars Academy, I jumped straight into ninth grade honors as an eighth grader (however, I didn't skip the grade). Within the Academy, I worked one on one with two teachers who made it their mission to challenge me and other students. They provided us with extra resources and give us interactive projects our first two years of high school. As a result, I formed close relationships with my fellow classmates and the two teachers. Since joining the Academy, school hasn't be easy per say, but it has made me realize that I have found my place in the educational world. For that, I am forever grateful.

As you can see, there are many reasons why I love PA Virtual. I have thrived as a result of it. I would be devastated to see such an option eliminated for me. Cyber education is important. Not just to me, but to the hundreds of students enrolled in my school. People consider us lazy, incompetent, or just another way to cut money. However, the people I have met joined PA Virtual BECAUSE the local districts failed them. BECAUSE those schools were incapable of meeting their needs. BECAUSE of bullying. BECAUSE they didn't offer education to satisfy advanced learners. BECAUSE of those reasons and so many more. I hope that you consider my words, Senate Education Committee. For two years now, I have known about the legislation trying to pass that can harm cyber charter schools. For two years, I have been crossing my fingers and hoping dearly that it does not go through. You will probably hear many sides of the story – protesters, supporters, teacher viewpoints, parent viewpoints. However, I want you to hear mine as well. I represent the students.

Sometimes students get forgotten in the mess of adult politics. That does not mean that your decisions will not impact us. Please, remember this. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Layla
Proud PA Virtual Student



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Jennifer

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My husband and I chose PA Virtual Charter School in 2002 and all three of our children have been enrolled. As a brick and mortar public school teacher I appreciated the virtual charter school option that provided our children with the finest public school education within a home learning environment. PA Virtual provided a rich, rigorous curriculum and caring, dedicated and certified teachers within a home learning environment that allowed our children to focus on academics and use their time efficiently. We were intrigued that the cyber charter model offered an equal education to all Pennsylvania students no matter what their zip code. I applaud the thought process of cyber charter innovation; that students living in a rural area of the commonwealth or a struggling urban area could receive the same superior education as a student residing in another region of the state. That is an example of equality within the realm of educational choice!

I believe that parents are responsible for their children's education. Parents are their children's first teachers and also their primary teachers. It is a parent's right and privilege to determine how their students are educated and which educational model is the best choice for that child at that point in their development. PA Virtual is unique because they identify their parents as partners in their children's education. That partnership is distinctive as compared to the local brick and mortar public school. Parents are learning alongside of their students, delighting in the everyday experiences while helping their child navigate challenges and develop character, resilience, study and organization skills, and time management.

PA Virtual was the right choice for our children and our family. It provided our children with a quality education that included challenging curriculum, support for learning differences, socialization and service opportunities, and engaging learning experiences that encouraged students to explore and contribute to the world around them. Our children were able to participate in sports, fine arts, and church and community activities and also had time to commit to community service and part-time jobs. Our three children are now successful adults, thriving in the local community. Our oldest graduated from college and is a teacher with Head Start. Our son graduated with his MBA in four years while a student-athlete at Thomas Jefferson University. Our youngest is a student-athlete in her second year at West Chester University and plans to obtain her bachelor's degree in three years before attending graduate school for Speech Language Pathology. Yes, we are very proud of our children's accomplishments. However, we are more proud of their character and desire to love and serve others in their community. These character traits are a direct impact of their experiences as cyber charter students and of the strong family unit we developed as a cyber charter family. The cyber charter model provides the opportunity to develop and strengthen the family unit. In turn, society benefits from the strength of the family within their region and what these students and their families contribute to their community.

Pennsylvania should continue to honor every parent's right to choose the best educational model for each of their children. Legislators need to recognize and show their belief that parents' freedom to make sound educational choices for their children should not be diminished or dismissed. As a taxpayer public school funding and my tax dollars should follow my student. Any additional cuts to cyber charter school funding

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will hurt children's equal educational opportunities and infringe on those students' rights to receive the best education that suits them.

Sincerely,

Jennifer
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Amber

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

When choosing the best avenue for our children's education, we considered many factors. The most important being their independent needs as a student. In traditional brick and mortar schools, the individual student's needs can fall by the wayside simply because there is not enough time in the day to nurture every need each individual student has. We feel that an online school caters to these individual needs and unique learning abilities. We also feel that we can guarantee a level of safety that cannot be guaranteed in a traditional public school setting.

We chose PA Virtual for our children's education because we like the advantageous nature of the open door partnership we have with their teachers. We know specifically where our child is thriving and where they may need further guidance, simply because we are part of their daily education. We also chose PA Virtual based upon the curriculum that they offer. The curriculum is more in depth and advanced than our local public school counterpart. This early exposure to certain concepts, especially in mathematics, will help to build a foundation that will allow a mastery by the time their contemporaries are just starting, giving them an advantage.

Being able to choose how and where my children receive their education should not be based on restrictive legislation, but what is in the best interest of the child.

Sincerely,

Amber
Proud Parent of 4 Cyber Chart School Children



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Sylvia

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I love PA Virtual and I am thankful and blessed to have the power to choose which school and type of learning my children can have to be educated. The idea that America is a place of democracy is the top reason why it is critical and necessary for parents to be able to choose. In the United States this country was founded for people to have the right to choose to worship God as they choose. This is the same reason why I love the right to choose for education. It allows the parent to choose how their children can receive the best education without anyone saying no. You are not forced to be in a brick and mortar school which have outdated books and interaction with peers that are not always focused on education but on other things that take away from the learning process. I love that my child can be educated in a safe environment with love and support. They are not forced to sit in an environment where there is peer pressure and the pressure of learning at the speed of the entire classroom. Although home base learning has structure it is still flexible to be an individual experience. I have been with PA Virtual for 13 years for my three children and I am beyond pleased with my experiences. Thank you for allowing this gift to be a part of my children's educational experience thus far.

Sincerely,

Sylvia

Proud PA Virtual Parent of 3 Cyber Charter School Children



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Corrina

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

We chose online education over 13+ years ago, when our oldest (who is a Freshman at Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA) was entering Kindergarten. At the time, we lived in a different school district in PA. We were questioning the academic goals of the district we resided. We went searching for other educational options. We landed on PA Virtual. We always said we would evaluate the program as a family year by year, and if it stopped working for our family, we would search for other options. In 2019, our oldest graduated from an online school, and our other three children (twins who are sophomores and our youngest in 6th grade) are all still enrolled in an online school. We have found great success as a family with educating this way. We would not change the way we have schooled our children.

Our children are all old enough to have an opinion about their schooling, and they have all voiced that they would not change the way they have been educated. They have caring, compassionate, talented teachers who go over and beyond to reach our children as well as all of the children in the classroom. They provide times to allow their students to express their own gifts and share among their peers. Our children all have met some of their best and closest friends through the online schools. They have gotten together with these friends on a weekly and monthly basis. When they can't get together in person, they e-mail, video chat, and text.

Our children have been able to take advantage of activities in the larger local area because of being online educated. We have done music lessons in one county in PA, while participating in sports in another county in PA. And all the while they attend classes with students from counties across the entire state of PA. This sets them up for their future, in this globally connected world we live in in the 21st century.

This model is not for everyone, but the McCready family has found success in online education. It should be an option for all families in the state of PA. The model has been around long enough to see graduates entering the workforce as upstanding citizens helping to nurture the next generation. Our own children have had teachers who were the product of online schools. Our own daughter has successfully transitioned from school to college and has done it just as well, if not better than her peers. Online education should not see cuts in the future. It should be an option right a long side the neighborhood brick and mortar school.

Sincerely,

Corrina
Cyber Family in Enon Valley



October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Rebecca

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

In order to explain why I chose PA Virtual, I'd need to take us back in time to 2008. In 2008, I was a brand new resident to Pennsylvania. We were a low income family with three young kids and my husband and I were in our early 20s. We were faced with the decision of where to send our five year old daughter to kindergarten. We had only one vehicle and my husband needed that for driving to work each day. So, I was also faced with needing transportation to safely get my five year old to and from school each day. I didn't know the area. I didn't know the schools. I had no idea who the teachers or faculty would be. And I had been an at-home mom having my kids with me all their early years. I didn't like the idea of separating them from each other or from me. Plus, I didn't want someone else raising my children.

PA Virtual solved most of these problems. PA Virtual provided a way to educate my children at home. Not only did I not need a vehicle or extra transportation. Not only did I not need to be separated from my child, nor have her separated from her siblings. PA Virtual also provided a quality curriculum, experienced and knowledgeable teachers, and a way for me to be a participant in my daughter's education. I was active in my daughter's classroom. Her siblings were able to witness the lessons and glean whatever information their young minds could retain. We had the resources of a quality education within the safety of our home environment.

Now, if we could fast forward to 2019, I'd like to tell you why I have stayed with PA Virtual. All three of my children are currently enrolled in PA Virtual. They are no longer young kindergarteners, now they are in middle school and high school. We've been working our way through the PA Virtual education system for about twelve years. We know people at PA Virtual. We know how the school works, what resources are available, where to go for help, or who to contact for more information. We have discovered the learning disabilities and chronic medical conditions that we didn't envision would be a part of our lives, but now we face daily.

Our learning disabilities and chronic medical conditions require Individual Education Plans, therapists, classroom modifications, and accommodations. My students require individual assistance to complete their school assignments and learn the material. They need a stable sensory environment, the stability of home, and the extra attention of a learning coach. Plus, our school schedule must accommodate extra therapy appointments, doctor's appointments, and still provide a quality education. We are still grateful for the experienced and knowledgeable teachers and faculty at PA Virtual. We are still blessed to have quality curriculum. By staying with this curriculum for all these years, the students have been provided a stable scope and sequence for their education and growth. We've also had consistency with therapists, special education teachers, and the approach to each students' education goals.

As each year get's more difficult, we've had a stable foundation of education because we have stayed with PA Virtual. We've kept the safe home classroom environment which we need now more than ever. We've had the stable quality curriculum and quality education team. We've had the continuation of education

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goals, both in success and in setbacks, yet still pushing toward the individual growth for each of my children. We've built a network of contacts, a familiarity with the school system, and we strive to work together to educate each student based on their individual special education needs.

Sincerely,

Rebecca

Parent of three PA Virtual Students



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Catrina

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I chose PA Virtual because sending my child to a traditional school building was not the right choice for my family. With schooling shootings, antivaxxers, bullying, non-trustworthy staff members within the school building, the choice to select PA Virtual was easy. They provide an excellent curriculum and we as Americans should always have the freedom to choose the education model that best fits our families.

Sincerely,

Catrina
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Sheri

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

When my husband and I began looking at our options for schooling our children, we considered a number of factors. We wanted a good, solid curriculum. We wanted to know what our girls were being taught and to be involved in educating our children and share in that learning and growth process. We also insisted on a safe environment where locked doors and security guards weren't necessary and the flexibility to be sure that our girls were able to spend the amount of time they needed on given concepts so that they actually understood it, not simply be lumped into the group moved along or held back with the rest of the class. We do not have the income to support private school and were concerned about the expense of buying a home school curriculum. In addition, we thought having someone to guide and help us in areas where we might need it would be beneficial, so we were thrilled to find public cyber school to be an option and believed it would be a good fit for our family.

We chose PA Virtual because we were impressed by the curriculum and by the true partnership between parents, teachers, and staff in the education model they use. The flexibility to learn asynchronously, if that works well for the student, synchronously, or a blend of the two is excellent. In that way, the students can work in a way that is best for them and incorporate different learning styles (visual, auditory, tactile, quick learner or slow learner, special needs, etc.) and still receive the support and guidance they need from qualified teachers and staff. My oldest child is now in college and is doing very well. I believe the computer and online communication skills she used in PA Virtual coupled with the self-discipline and ability to study and work independently that she learned throughout her PA Virtual school years set her up for success. I have seen significant growth in these areas in my other girls who are now both in high school. We would not have been able to provide that for our children if it were not for having a public virtual charter school option.

It is imperative that these options remain open and available for all students of Pennsylvania to receive the best education that they can receive and that best fits their family needs. The money for public education should benefit ALL students to receive a QUALITY education. Students and families should not be penalized (by reduced funding or excessive regulation, or any other means) because they do not believe the brick and mortar system is not a right fit for them. Parents have the responsibility and the right to choose the best education model possible for their children, and children have the right to a good education that works for them, regardless of the parents' income. Funding for cyber schooling is essential, and our tax dollars should support the education of our children and should follow the students where the students are. That is, the funds for each child should "follow the student" for the child's education. That is what the money is there for, not to fund schools where the student is not.

Sincerely,

Sheri
Proud PA Virtual Parent

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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Kathleen

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I am writing to you of my concerns regarding the cutting of funds to PA Virtual Charter School and to all PA Cyber Schools. Let me begin by letting you know that both my sons attended traditional schools when they were younger; so, do not put me in the realm of a bias against traditional schools. Why I chose cyber schools is simply this: my sons needed a better environment for learning, free from a bias against them, and an education that is superior for advancement in this world.

The bias against my first son was his Asperger's Autism and ADHD; the bully was actually a teacher who refused to listen to therapists about my son's requirements for a productive day in school. The response from the teacher was, "I have a responsibility to the other students" - there was a total of 8 students in the class. I found out later (when school was done for the year) that the teacher put my son in front of the class and had his classmates tell him one-by-one why they did not like my son! My voice was silenced by the principal and other staff, so, I went looking for a better alternative; I found it in the cyber school community.

My oldest son started a cyber school in 2nd grade and it was fantastic! My youngest son attended a traditional school for 4 years; from K-3rd grade. I noticed my oldest son was surpassing all my expectations in academics, yet, my youngest was barely reading, or writing, a complete sentence in 3rd grade. I put him in a cyber school for 4th grade, their tests showed that he was two grades behind those students in 4th grade at the cyber school. My son received two tutors to help bring him up to the class levels, all the while attending his regular classes and doing homework that was assigned from the regular teachers. By the end of the year, my youngest son not only caught up in class, he completed his PSSA testings with a mark of advanced on all subjects!

What has cyber schools accomplished for my sons now? My oldest son was an A student and completed his Keystone Tests in one try and all were marked Advanced. He went on to Triangle Tech, in Pittsburgh, Pa., and graduated with High Honors and now works for Advanced Steel. My youngest is an A student and he completed all his Keystone tests with Advanced and 1 Proficient; he is now in 11th grade.

PA Virtual Charter School, along with other cyber schools, truly have one goal in mind – to help children achieve the very best for their life, through quality academics, a dedicated, excellent, supportive group of teachers and staff. If you cut off funding for these cyber schools, you are cutting off my son's future and all the other parent's hopes for their children's future. Remember this, not every child belongs in a traditional brick and mortar school - mine did not, and their future is looking quite bright. Please, give parents a chance at a better future for their children; stop playing politics with our children's education and lives!

Sincerely,
Kathleen
Proud PA Virtual Parent

A COMMUNITY OF PARTNERSHIP, LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT



October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Gwen

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

My husband and I have 4 children. Our oldest daughter attended our local public school starting in 7th grade. She graduated from there in June of 2014. During her sophomore year she got a concussion while playing varsity soccer for her high school. Our daughter was injured while playing for the school. She was a top notch student also. She was enrolled in honors classes and maintained A's and B's. Her concussion was very bad and required her to stay home with many restrictions for a long time. She needed the amount of light and sound to be very low. She could only work in short bursts of time. Her neurologist at UPMC filled out all the paperwork for her to be a home-bound student. Yet, I could not get any of her work or a home-bound teacher assigned for about a month. The school did not start to cooperate until I told them that my lawyer would be in touch with them. This is just one example of the issues we experienced at this school district.

Our second oldest daughter, Katelyn is on the Autism Spectrum. We were not confident that she would be treated well or be able to learn in this school district. We chose to try PA Virtual Charter School for 1 year and see how she did. We now have 3 children enrolled with PA Virtual. PA Virtual Charter School was absolutely the right choice for our family. Katelyn has done amazingly well in school. She was inducted into the National Junior Honor Society, invited to apply and accepted into the Scholars Program and is so far ahead in her schooling that she has the opportunity to apply to graduate a year early. The Scholars program allowed Katelyn to start taking her High School classes in 8th grade instead of 9th. These were honors classes that were mainly taught by the same two teachers with the same students together. This program allowed the students to move at a much more aggressive rate than the students not in the Scholars Program. It also gave them exposure to all kinds of extra projects and group work that built on the lessons they were already learning. This was an incredible experience for Katelyn.

Our third child, Michael, started with PA Virtual in Kindergarten. He was asked to take part in a special class that was provided thanks to a grant in 1st grade. In this class, there were three teachers who all worked together. The kids would have a warm-up type session all together before each subject. Then the kids would be separated by skill level for the subject they were working on into three groups, one with each teacher. At the time, Michael was advanced in all of his subjects, except for one. He was struggling with learning how to read. Because of how this class was run, Michael received the help he needed in Language Arts, yet was still able to be challenged and move at a faster pace in all of his other subjects. I truly believe this was what set the foundation for him. He is now a phenomenal reader and a straight A student. Michael has only ever had 1 grade lower than an A. He had 1 B+ in Pre-Algebra last year. Michael was also inducted into the National Junior Honor Society last year.

Our youngest child, Abigail, started with PA Virtual in Kindergarten last year. Abby loved Kindergarten! Abby was invited to go to an extra class called Rock Stars that met after all of the regular classes were finished. During this time, Abby was exposed to all kinds of extra lessons. They did in-depth studies of the solar system, weather, jobs, artists, and even different languages. Every month they focused on something



new. Abby especially enjoyed the month on different languages. They learned some American Sign Language, Spanish, French and Korean. Abby is a child who needs to be challenged. Learning sometimes comes very easy to her and she can get bored easy with repetition. Having these Rock Star sessions at the end of the day to look forward to helped her not become bored with school. This year Abby is part of a class that is trying out a new curriculum for our school. This has been great for her. Similar to with Michael, her teacher has the flexibility to group the kids by skill level within her class. This has again allowed Abby to spend less time on the subjects that she masters quickly and more time on the subjects or topics she may struggle with some.

Our children are receiving a top notch education with PA Virtual Charter School that I 100% believe they would not receive if they were attending our local brick and mortar school district. The teachers at PA Virtual are completely invested in seeing and helping the kids succeed in school and in life. Our teachers go above and beyond what is expected of them and what they are paid for on a regular basis. It is very common that instead of taking a lunch break, my son's Algebra I teacher will stay with the students to make sure that if they have a question while working on homework she is available to explain it to them. The teachers make the lessons engaging and relatable to the students. They do lots of experiments and projects that show the kids WHY they are learning what they are learning and how it REALLY DOES apply to real life. My kids all understand that they are not just memorizing fact to regurgitate for tests, they are learning how to be productive, educated members of society.

I have watched all 3 of my younger children have topics or subjects they struggle with. I have also watched all 3 of them have teachers who just WOULD NOT give up on them. They worked with my kids until the light bulb went on and they understood. Seeing how much my son struggled with reading compared to how quickly he finishes and understands advanced books has been amazing. Michael also struggled with writing. In 4th grade the new Text Dependent Analysis type questions were being presented and taught to our kids. Michael struggled with this unbelievably. He would have an article to read with 3 or 4 questions that needed answered in an essay type format. There were many times that it would take Michael 8-12 hours over multiple days to complete one assignment. This was NOT normal. His teacher at the time listened to what I was telling her. She would meet with Michael after normal school hours and work with him. She was incredibly patient with him. There were times that they would spend an entire hour working and he would only be able to get one sentence down. But she never gave up on him. She never made him feel like he was wasting her time. By 5th grade, he was a little bit better. He could at least find the facts in the article and highlight them on his own. However, this teacher worked with him on how to put things into his own words. She worked very hard with Michael on how to come up with a topic sentence and how the essay could just flow from there. His essays were now taking only 5-6 hours over multiple days to complete. This is still not a normal amount of time, but we were seeing improvement and he was UNDERSTANDING! In 6th grade Michael was blessed to have one of the most incredible teachers I believe is on this planet. I'm truly not exaggerating. If you ever have an opportunity to sign into one of Cindy Willits' classes, take it. Mrs. Willits got Michael to the point where he was completely writing on his own. This was a miracle. In 6th grade, Michael researched, took notes and wrote his entire research paper on his own. I was asked not to look at it or make any comments until it was done. Michael did an amazing job and got an A, completely on his own. He now is excelling in ALL of his subjects. Michael now believes in himself and has seen first-hand that even when something is hard and you think you will never be able to do it, if you put in the time and hard work and get help when needed, he can accomplish anything.

In closing, I know in my heart that if you take away the funding and the parents' choice for schooling, it will be a huge disservice to the children of Pennsylvania. My children would not be where they are today if they attended Windber Area School District. I know that. I also know that my 3 children are not alone as far as having incredible stories of success because of PA Virtual Charter School. Please do not take away our freedom of choice. I truly hope that all 3 of my younger children will be able to finish their schooling



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and graduate from PA Virtual Charter School. Taking this away from them will undoubtedly change their futures in a negative way.

Sincerely,

Gwen

Proud Parent of 3 PA Virtual Charter School Children



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Dallas

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I have two children ages 11 and 13. They were both abused as infants, prior to their adoptions and suffer from major behavioral and mental health issues. PA Virtual has an async program that allows us to complete their schooling, while also allowing space for their issues. In the brick and mortar school, both children were on the verge of expulsion. At PA Virtual, both my children are A and B students and will be able to graduate with honors. This is because the async program allows us to cater to their needs and complete school work at the optimal times each day and night.

Sincerely,

Dallas

Parent of 2 PA Virtual Children



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Neelofer

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

When my daughter who is now 15 years of age was ready to start Kindergarten, we went to the local school and I remember asking the teacher how my daughter would be challenged since she was already ahead in reading and math. She said, She could be involved with maybe helping other kids. Not the answer I wanted to hear. So I started to look around and home schooled her for the first year but being a busy physician it was difficult. And then I found PA Virtual Charter School as a Godsend. PA Virtual allowed my daughter to stay at home and not be involved in all the emotional drama at school. She can incorporate her religious education with her secular. Lots of opportunities for her to volunteer, study ahead in class. She is very social so that has not been a limitation as many people believe.

Currently, I have my youngest daughter who is 10 years of age and my son who is a Senior at Temple in Management Information System is a graduate of the same school since eighth grade. He was in a brick and mortar school but PA Virtual offered him what he needed. As an Indian Muslim physician, culturally we are high achievers and the curriculum at PA Virtual offers my children that same opportunity without the added drama that is a part of the middle and High school system here. The teachers are amazing and are like their friends. They are able to offer one to one sessions in their office hours as well. There are multiple outings and activities which provides the balance that is needed.

With the current gun violence, I also feel that my children are safer. I do feel that school choice is very important since we all come from different backgrounds and I need a more holistic education for my children so this worked out better for me. If this was not available then I would have to go part time at work and homeschool them as many parents are now doing. I think it would be the worst move to cut charter school funding as it will displace opportunities for a lot of high functioning children who maybe tomorrow's leaders. I feel PA Virtual prepared my children very well for college. As a higher bracket tax payer, I would not want to lose this opportunity for my children.

Sincerely,

Neelofer

Proud parent of 3 cyber charter school kids who are aiming high in life



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Laverne

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

My middle son graduated from PA Virtual in 2015, and my youngest is currently in his 4th year (began in 2nd Grade). Because of the declining conditions in our neighborhood public school building (lack of quality teaching and safety issues), Cyber school was the best choice for my children. My youngest has Asperger's and being on the Autism Spectrum, my investigation of public schools with Special Education services has shown that the support and qualified teachers in this area is sorely lacking. The model of putting 2nd to 8th grade students all in the same learning environment was something that my husband and I found completely unacceptable. Unfortunately, we also found that Private schools are not obligated to accept children with IEP's and in need of Special Education services, so PA Virtual was the obvious choice. Having had one child who previously graduated from PA Virtual, I was familiar with their curriculum and model of learning and knew this was the school for my youngest son.

The quality of education is top notch. The teachers are very knowledgeable and quick to answer any requests or address any issues. I also appreciate having a hand in my son's education, being able to guide him through his learning and help him where needed. In many cases, the courses are set up in a way for the child to learn by repetition, which is helpful.

I believe Pennsylvania should honor and respect every parent's right to choose whatever educational model will help their child learn, achieve, and become productive and independent citizens far beyond graduation. As for school funding and our tax dollars, if it's helping the children and families who have no other options for education and they're TRULY benefiting, why take it away? Why cut or reduce it? If Cyber school is allowing opportunities not available anywhere else because of mismanagement of funds, or because a school is in a "low performing" area (which means they receive NO aid, grants, services, support, etc.), it would be unfair to take away funding and penalize the children who are blossoming because of being in a safe environment conducive to learning. These are my thoughts on the matter. Your attention is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Laverne
Proud Parent of PA Virtual Student



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Candice and Tom

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

Our family has been attending PA Virtual for about 15 years. Three of our four children have already graduated from PA Virtual (2013, 2016 and 2019). As Christian parents we decided to educate our children in our home and PA Virtual has given us the perfect opportunity. We chose to homeschool our children by way of the PA Virtual Charter School because we wanted to be involved in our children's education and know what is being taught to them.

PA Virtual has provided and continues to provide a great education for our children. Our oldest child who graduated in 2013 received his B.S. in Kinesiology from Penn State University and is currently enrolled in the online Master's program at Indiana University of PA. In May of 2020, he will receive his Masters in Health and Physical Education. Our daughter (2016), is currently attending our local community college where she will graduate in December and receive her Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education. She plans to be a Reading Specialist Assistant at one of the local school districts. In June of 2019, our son graduated from PA Virtual and is currently enrolled in the local community college majoring in Criminal Justice where he plans to graduate with an Associate's Degree and attend the Pennsylvania Police Academy and become a PA State Police Officer. Finally, our youngest son is currently a freshman at PA Virtual.

One can see that the PA Virtual faculty and administrators have done an excellent job educating our children and preparing them for their future. They have always been supportive and available to help our children. Pennsylvania needs to continue to honor every parent's right to choose the best educational model for their children. Every child learns in a different environment and it is important to have that choice for our children's education.

As a family in PA, we pay our taxes and those tax dollars should follow our choice for their education. Our children's education is important to us and I believe that our choice for our children's education should not be compromised because of school funding and how many dollars are allowed to follow our child based on our choice of education for them. Every child's education is important, but don't punish the families who choose to educate their children through cyber charter schools. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Candice and Tom

Very proud parents of 3 PA Virtual Graduates and 1 current PA Virtual Student



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Ines

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I live in the city of Philadelphia. In the hood to be more specific. Along with classes and study time, tests and disgruntled employees, my child would also have to deal with ill tempered, hormonal students. Not to mention walking to and from school passing a number of "active corners."

I LOVE the option of being able to make sure that my child gets a good education without outside worries. Plus, the top notch, caring and dedicated teachers that he has the pleasure of working with? I wouldnt change a thing! We love PA Virtual!

Sincerely,

Ines

Proud parent and grandparent of two PA Virtual students



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Brigid

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

The original reason my family chose to put me into online school in kindergarten was because I got rejected by the school I tried out for, and the local public school had a reputation for bullying and poor education. So, they put me in the same school as my cousins, which ended up being PA Virtual. Once I reached high school, the decision of which school to attend was mine, and I chose to stay at PA Virtual for several reasons. First the semi flexible scheduling and avoiding buses. Second was being able to choose my own classes, which the local schools rarely allow. Third was knowing I would receive a superior education to most of my public schooled peers for several districts around. The choice of staying in PA Virtual has allowed me to travel internationally during the normal school year without missing school, among many other wonderful events the flexibility of this school system has allowed.

Public school funding and tax dollars should follow students to the school they attend, even if it is not their traditional brick and mortar school. The local brick and mortar schools often try to push out cyber students or make it extremely difficult for them to participate in school sports or events, such as dances. This is ridiculous! These schools do not do anything for cyber students. They even go out of their way to avoid letting us participate in events we are legally allowed to be part of - it is preposterous! If they get even partial funding for a student they actively try to alienate. It is too much! Funding for each student should go to the school that will actually spend it on educating them, paying for skilled and passionate teachers, and creating a positive learning and growing environment.

Sincerely,

Brigid

PA Virtual Student of nearly 12 years



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Marion

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

PA Virtual has been a blessing for our family. Our 9 year son was really struggling in brick and mortar school. He was getting lost in the cracks because his struggle was not initially academic, it was behavioral and social. Academically, he was tested as gifted and performing at least 1 grade level above, but his performance was falling with each semester there. The teachers could only focus on academics, so he was sent outside of the classroom either to the office or hallway. He did not qualify for learning support. He was only in classes about 15% of the day per his teachers. The school could not provide the resources that he needed. Getting private resources meant missing school hours for each appointment. He was being excluded while being labelled a "bad kid" so that other kids were taught to exclude him as well. Switching to PA Virtual has allowed us to obtain and provide the resources that he needs without missing school hours because we can work at our own pace while still following state approved curriculum. In the 2.5 years that we have been with PA Virtual, he has received the support that he needs to help social interactions, gain confidence, improve self-esteem, and in turn improve academically because he now wants to learn again. He even ENJOYS learning again!

PA Virtual also provides social interactions that he needs to practice his learned skills in a safe environment. He chooses which outings to attend and he ALWAYS has one on one support that he needs because a parent/learning coach must attend the outings.

Each staff member that we have encountered in our 2.5 years with PA Virtual has been supportive, attentive, and flexible while providing the education he needs. They focus on the positives that he brings to the day and that encourages him to do his best.

The public school funding and tax dollars should follow my student because where he is receiving the education and support that he needs, is where the costs are incurred.

Sincerely,

Marion
Grateful to PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

John

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

PA Virtual was the best choice for my grandson, Elijah. We did a lot of research about online schools before choosing PA Virtual. Elijah loves the small classrooms. Learning what is important for him to succeed in life. Elijah's reading, math, writing, etc. has greatly improved the past two years. The teachers are tremendous and are always encouraging the students. They always praise the students for doing a good job! Every child's needs are different and PA Virtual succeeds in fulfilling those needs. This leads to a child wanting to do school work! The tools, books, course lessons provided are great for a child to learn with. Why shouldn't my tax dollars go to PA Virtual??? They provide the computer, printer, books, work books, etc. for my grandson to succeed. Most of all they provide the best, caring teachers! Not all children are meant to go to public schools. Not all families can pay for private schools. MOST OF ALL THERE IS NO BULLYING!!!!!! If you vote against PRIVATE SCHOOLS---then send your child or children to a school where they will get bullied everyday and the school administration will do nothing about it except give you lip service!!! SCHOOL CHOICE IS MY CHOICE!!! Thank you!

Sincerely,

John
Grandfather, Learning Coach, and U.S. Army veteran



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Rebecca

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

Cyber Charter schools are an important option for parents and students in Pennsylvania. This choice gives parents more control of the education their students receive. With Cyber school, parents can oversee and personalize the education of their children and still have the support of certified teachers. Children benefit from the flexibility to work at their own pace and receive the individual attention that they need to thrive in school.

For our family, it has been a wonderful chance to watch our kids grow and learn. Anytime there is something they struggle with learning and need more time on, we have been able to take the time for them to really understand it before moving on. While at the same time, when they pick up something quickly, they don't need to linger over it waiting for the rest of the class to 'catch up.' This takes away much of the stress of learning and has allowed our children to develop a love of learning.

I believe that parents should be given the option to decide what is best for their children. One way that option stays available to parents is by allowing state tax funds to be applied to the school parents feel is best for their student. When a family chooses to have their students attend a cyber school, a portion of their education tax dollars should go to the charter school they are attending. These charter schools are public schools, open to all students. Therefore, they should receive state funding. And they shouldn't need to fight to get it.

Sincerely,

Rebecca



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Lourdes

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

Letting my child attend this online school continues to prove that it was a very great decision. For years, my child has gone to the local school closest to our home. It was alright in the first few years, but it wasn't great, not compared to the experiences we have at PA Virtual. Learning new material was difficult for my child in a regular brick and mortar school. Even though her grades were okay, the concept of learning new things became harder for her, which affected her grades. In PA Virtual, learning became easier.

For the past three years of attending this school, all her grades have been straight A's. So many times has my child complained about her old school, she continually told me how mean and unhelpful the teachers were, and how unfair they were too. Contacting these teachers was very stressful for me, because they never responded, and when they did respond, it didn't help the situation. My daughter told me that they would punish the whole class for the misbehavior of only a few students. In my opinion, online school is better socially, because bullying is not common at all. The staff are very nice and helpful, and all the students that my child is surrounded with are very nice and well behaved compared to the kids in her old school. On my part, online school has been very beneficial to me financially. Uniforms use to be very expensive at her old school, and on top of that, I had to provide the school supplies and additional cleaning supplies for the classroom. In PA Virtual, the school provides me with the supplies I need, and I only need to buy things such as notebooks and pencils. Online school is the best choice for my child, not only does she enjoy attending this school, but as a family we all are satisfied with the experiences we've had and still have today. I am PA Virtual proud!

Sincerely,

Lourdes

Proud PA Virtual Parent, Lourdes Torres



October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Shalane

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I chose PA virtual Charter School, because I wanted a better educational opportunity for my children. Unfortunately, with the brick-and-mortar schools the teachers would not stay on task when it came to learning materials. They would either move around the learning materials, and (or) remove a lot of much-needed information. So when my children started PA Virtual Charter School, they were missing a great deal of those building blocks that was needed for them to understand simple math and reading.

The teachers at PA virtual have helped my children fill in those missing blocks and much-needed material they needed for their grade level. Now they are confident and very strong in reading and math. It is much easier for them to follow directions regarding their school work and not become frustrated. PA Virtual was the right choice for my children.

I also do not have to worry about my child being harassed or bullied. When that did happen in the brick or mortar schools the teachers would either hide that my child was harmed by another student or ignore my child's pleas for help in dealing with the aggressive students. My child was harmed at the school and needed medical attention outside of a school nurse. They chose to keep it in-house and not even call me to inform me that my child was harmed. With PA Virtual I now know that I'm sending my child to school to receive an education and that is what my tax dollars pay for. Public school funding and my tax dollars should follow my children. Any additional cuts to cyber charter school funding will hurt my children's educational opportunities. I tried the brick-and-mortar schools for years and there was no improvement. Unfortunately, it got worse. Every time I would drop my child off I felt like a failure as a parent that I could not find a good public or Charter School to send my child to. Finally, I have found that in PA virtual Charter School.

Sincerely,

Shalane

Proud Parent of 3 Cyber Charter School Children



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Stephanie

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

Cyberschooling offers the perfect mix of the professional educators we need for our children's learning and the flexibility which we love. Since our sons never waste time on buses or lining up for classes, it enables them to have more time for learning. My older son, has definite learning challenges, but graduated from PA Virtual in 2019 and is now enrolled at Luzerne County Community College. He pays for his own tuition by working part time. While enrolled in a public brick-and-mortar school, he would daily be pulled out of class for extra support, which had the negative attributes of loss of learning the material concomitantly being taught in the 'regular' classroom and the obvious social stigma of being a slow learner. This extra help was crammed into the "bookend time" unalterably regulated by the school bus schedule, but, in cyber school, his reading teacher and speech therapist could be scheduled around the other 'regular' classes, improving all aspects of his learning.

Since our family has been enrolled in PA Virtual, one trait which has bloomed unexpectedly is that learning is no longer confined to the 'school'; we are learning all of time and everywhere! As there isn't such a sharp delineation between home and school, our children have additional time to participate in housework, cooking and chores, as well as their own hobbies, and so they are being trained to view life with the perspective that it is a 'whole entity,' which I think is very healthy. Our home is certainly not perfect, and our son definitely had sticker shock when paying for his own college textbooks, (Who doesn't?) but I am extremely confident that the cyberschool option was the best one for our family. I think it is easiest to teach life and reality skills when students have a sense of the cost of both education and the cost of a healthy home life.

Sincerely,

Stephanie



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Lindsey

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I have been cyber schooling my children for 9 years. It started with my oldest daughter whom had some health issues at the time. It was causing her to miss a lot of school. Her health issues also made it hard for me as a parent to provide the time needed for my other kids as far as making sure childcare was available while appointments seemed to over take our life at that time. So, I pulled my other child at that time also in placed her in cyber school as it was much easier for our hectic lives. The point to me explaining this scenario is as such, we as parents should have the right to determine what works best for our children and our children's education. The public school in our area does have cyber classes available through their district. I did utilize their system the first year and quickly learned, their program was NOT at all what I wanted and needed for my children to learn, grow and flourish. I then put my children into PA Cyber for a couple years. I was content with their programs and learning platforms but I was left feeling like I needed more. That is when I looked in to PA Virtual. Three years with PA Virtual and I am beyond thankful I made the switch. I have 3 children enrolled, 2nd Grade, 5th Grade, 10th Grade. The teachers and staff are beyond amazing. EVERY step of the way, EVERY day, 100% invested in helping the child/children with anything they need. This kind of attention and time investment is NOT available in our school district that my children would have to attend if cyber wasn't available.

I do not feel it is anyone's right to step in and take away our rights as parents to continue our children's education as we see fit. When something works and works well, why change it? These educators work above and beyond. These are OUR children, our future, our rights as parents to choose. Especially when I can speak for my children in saying their education through PA Virtual is by far a BETTER, more involved education than our local district could EVER give to my children. This is my right as a parent and I do not feel it is fair for you to decide what is best for my children. I also put the time in, I don't send my children to a "brick and mortar" school to depend on someone else to do my job. The parents in cyber, ALONG with the educators work together more than a regular school system. That alone speaks for itself! More communication between educators and parents, means more successful students in the end. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Lindsey
Proud Parent of 3 Cyber Charter School Children



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Angela

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

This is my 13th year homeschooling my children. My 3 older children graduated from PA Virtual and 2 attended college. I've been homeschooling my 12 year old son since Kindergarten. My son is dyslexic and also has a vision issue. PA Virtual offers him so much support. Our local school district is extremely over crowded and Robert would have never received the care he needs to be successful in public school.

Sincerely,

Angela



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Mary

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I chose PA Virtual for my son in 2016 as he was receiving a less than adequate education at a parochial school and the school district in which we live was put on state notice for poor scores. In addition, my son has intellectual disabilities and the school did not re-evaluate my son prior to high school when I requested it for many months.

I telephoned PA Virtual to see if they could direct me toward options when I found out they had a Special Education Department. This was THE BEST decision I have ever made! My son is far from perfect, but the teachers are fantastic. They actually care about the students and how to teach them in the best way possible. I was so impressed that I moved my younger son from his brick and mortar school to PA Virtual and he has thrived!!

I know that my sons are not only getting a good education with teachers who actually care about them, but I know they are safe in a positive moral environment within my home.

Sincerely,

Mary
PA Virtual PROUD!



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Daimee

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

PA Virtual is an amazing choice for my son because I can have a hand in his learning. We don't live in a good neighborhood, and this school keeps my son safe. We don't have much money, so he doesn't have to wear uniforms that I can't afford. If he was in regular school, he would risk being bullied or picked on. Public school has become a fashion statement and classes are over crowded. The teacher to student ratio is just horrible. I appreciate the fact that the teachers at PA Virtual are hands on. Since he started this school, his grades have improved. He's more into school. This is the best option for my son's education. Without this school, I feel like my child would just be lost in the system. Inner city schools do not care about our youth. At PA Virtual, there is no race just learning. I don't fear for my sons safety, as he is home. It's very dangerous in our neighborhood and this is what I choose for him. People in poverty don't care about other people's lives so fights and robbing etc happen to often. My child was robbed at ten for his sneakers as he just got out of school. It's not safe, and online school is.

Sincerely,

Daimee

2nd year proud parent of PA Virtual



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Patti

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

Before we ever became parents, the most common quote we heard from parents was that "The years go by so quickly!" How true that is! We chose an online school so that we could have as much time as possible with our children. We have had five children successfully graduate from PA Virtual, and we look forward to five more of our children graduating!

We chose PA Virtual because of the quality education they offer. It is advanced and yet a great challenge for the students. Recently our teenage daughter shared a conversation that she had with her teenage boyfriend that went to the local public high school. He assured her that her parents made the right choice to have her do an online school! We do not take for granted our freedom of choice. So many times we hear how our tax dollars are being wasted. We cannot think of a better way to invest our tax dollars for the education of our cyber students.

Sincerely,

Patti

Grateful Parents of 10 Cyber Charter School Children



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Shan

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

Our family chose PA Virtual Charter School after my son struggled starting High School in the traditional brick and mortar school setting. Starting in October 2018, I watched my son struggle with testing and lack of support from his Guidance Department. I met with the teachers and Guidance counselors frequently. However, the lack of resources to help my son during the school day were extremely limited due to the school size and the student to teacher ratio.

Joining PA Virtual has made my son a different person in so many positive ways. He has been working towards a more successful academic outcome and his self confidence has grown to a level that I could not be more proud. This has in turn has opened up a future to him that he did not see possible before virtual school. During his freshmen year of traditional high school he was just "going through the motions" and did not have clear career goals beyond graduation. He is now motivated more than ever to continue his education and looking to more focused career initiatives beyond just getting a diploma.

Sincerely,

Shan
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Christina

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and members of the Senate Education Committee;

I am a proud PA Virtual parent and extremely grateful for the opportunity for my six children to have a stellar education from home in partnership with PA Virtual.

When my oldest child, now 14 and in 9th grade at PA Virtual, got his bus slip when he was 5 years old and it indicated that he would be picked up at 7:15 am and dropped off at 4:00 pm at only 5 years old, I looked into other alternative schooling options. It seemed like such a long time to be away from home for such a small child. When a friend mentioned all that PA Virtual offered and that they offered a tuition free public education and the award winning k12 curriculum, I was overjoyed. I met with the Admissions office and signed him up that day.

I was so impressed by the quality of the curriculum and the commitment of the administration and teachers that I signed up my second child the next year. Since 2010, I've continued to enroll all of my six children at PA Virtual. This year, my youngest child, Lucas, just entered kindergarten.

When we were thinking of moving to New Jersey to be closer to my family because of our growing family, we decided to stay in Pennsylvania to take advantage of the tuition free public education afforded to us in Pennsylvania. We were able to purchase a home in a lesser desirable neighborhood that could accommodate our growing family knowing this school was an excellent option for our children. It has been a choice that has continued to serve my children with a quality education in a home based learning environment.

It is a privilege to watch my children grow, learn, and thrive before my eyes. With a large family and many financial obligations as well as living in a less than desirable school district, PA Virtual offers my children a quality education, excellent curriculum, certified, committed and enthusiastic teachers all from home. They are taking advantage of all the opportunities afforded to them through the curriculum, teacher instruction, latest technology, books, excellent curriculum and manipulatives and are thriving in a loving and safe environment.

I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and right afforded to us in Pennsylvania and whole-heartedly support school choice.

Sincerely,

Christina

A COMMUNITY OF PARTNERSHIP, LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Heather

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

PA Virtual Charter School has been a great fit for my children. They both are excelling in grades and participation. They lead the class in group sessions and socialize with other children in the groups offered by the school. They enjoy talking to the teachers online and at outings throughout the state. We enjoy going to outings, many more options than we had attended at the prior brick and mortar school. We switched from a parochial school to PA Virtual. St Christopher was said to be the best in the area here, and we had attended for 7 years. I was looking into the cyber school system for high school and found PA Virtual because online it stated that it was the best rated and user friendly by parents. My daughter asked to switch over early prior to high school, so we started in 7th grade and it has been a wonderful educational experience since. Please do not change any of the funding to our online charter school. It has been an amazing experience for my children and we wish to continue their education at the best rated cyber school in the state! The teachers have been amazing!

Sincerely,

Heather
Parent Ambassador Heather Johnston



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Dina

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I am writing to you to let you know how PA Virtual has benefited my kids in many ways. My ability to choose Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School helped my kids escape bullying and gang related violence. In addition to being safer, my kids are receiving better schooling. I am highly satisfied to be involved in my kids' education. On top of this, my ability to choose a virtual public school such as PA Virtual is doing a great job at cultivating civic virtues in my kids, such as civic participation and tolerance. This choice tends to give more focus to character and moral formation, something every parent value in schools.

Sincerely,

Dina
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Heather

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I have two children in the public school system. My oldest daughter was in a brick and mortar school until middle school. We decided as a family due to her hectic gymnastics schedule and her ability to be an independent learner that cyber school was a great option for her. She has excelled in school over the past two years. PA Virtual let us collaborate with her educational needs, her IEP and her sport which is necessary for her to focus in school. Our son continues to go to a brick and mortar school. I believe our family is a perfect example of taking each child and giving them the best educational opportunity so they become successful learners.

Sincerely,

Heather
Proud Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Stephanie

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and members of the Senate Education Committee;

Having a good and firm foundation is important for success in life. If the foundation on your home falls, so do the walls, ceiling, roof, and everything attached to it. This is just like life. I want my children to have a firm foundation and learn important principles such as morals and values. Integrity is a building block that supports the foundation. My children tried brick and mortar school. They came home every day worried about bullies on the bus, getting picked on at recess, or about teachers who had racist tendencies. I want my children's focus not to be on those things but learning, having fun in school, and loving their teachers. I found that my children have all those positive behaviors at PA Virtual Charter School. My children experience inclusion, no clicks, real friendships, and an amazing partnership with their teachers and family, along with quiet time to do their work in. They do not have the same negative worries that they did in brick and mortar school. This way of learning is so important for our family. Having a choice of where to send our child is a must! We are the ones who truly know our children and what is best for them. PA Virtual Charter School is what my children need. They are getting that good foundation needed so when a storm comes their way, they know how to navigate through it without the worries of failing.

Some people worry about children getting enough socialization if you do school at home. If your child is only getting socialization through school, that is not good. My children go to many of the PA Virtual Charter School outings every month, they attend a youth group, and they take theatre, art, and gym classes weekly, and are in sports. My children are more vocal and social than I am and I went to brick and mortar.

There is so much more I can say about our amazing PA Virtual Charter School! The teachers are loving, caring, knowledgeable, and organized. They teach in a way my child can learn from and implement it in everyday life. When in virtual class, the students have rules like brick and mortar. Raise your hand to speak, encourage other students, and clap for your fellow students as they share their work on the microphone and video. My children talk to their classmates daily. They still have friends from kindergarten that they made through Pa Virtual. Their bonds are real and amazing.

In conclusion, we as parents should have the choice to choose the school that will benefit each of our children's needs and what our children want too. We choose PA Virtual!

Sincerely,

Stephanie
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Bethany

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I chose to cyber school my daughter because she was being bullied. Our public school System was “anti-bullying,” however when it actually came to it there was very little done to protect my daughter. She began to hate school, her grades dropped and she started to have very low self esteem. I looked into homeschooling at that point and decided that cyber school was our best option. PA Virtual had high standards and great results. My daughter started the program and within weeks brought her grades up, loved school once again and began to become more confident. She loves her teachers in her classes and has made a lot of new friends. She looks forward to learning and isn’t ashamed to just be the person that she is.

I also love the program because I’m able to keep in better contact with the teachers. A quick email and they are back in touch with me within minutes and sometimes just a few hours. I’m able to know exactly what my daughter is doing so I can help her out wherever needed. The outings are great for socialization and to get to know other students and parents.

Everyone should have the right to choose cyber schooling as an option. If we didn’t have it my daughter would still have to deal with the daily bullying because we cannot afford to send her to a private school. Every child has a right to learn even if it means in a different environment. It’s no different than a teacher using different approaches to help a child learn.

Sincerely,

Bethany
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Robin

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I have chosen this particular school format after many YEARS of deliberation. It is what suits our family's needs and requirements. I do not feel that my local district is a particularly good school. I've never seen happy or stellar students come from it. But, I have seen plenty of angry, lazy individuals come out. Not only this, but their state numbers are less than impressive AND the bus does not stop on our road. I don't drive and am not particularly interested in 7 AM treks with both my student and my younger son in the snow.

I had already decided to school from home before discovering how far virtual charters have grown. When I looked into it and discovered that they not only provided the ability to school my own sons in our home but also provided the curriculum and social interaction with teachers and other kids I was sold. My son has sensory processing disorder, anxiety disorders and defiance disorders...as well as being incredibly smart. So he has a difficult time facing even the slightest pressure. At home we're able to work through this. Helping him to understand the feelings, the cause and how to grow through them. In a traditional school, he would be treated like a stupid trouble maker and be put to the side. He is neither of these, but he does need the extra work put into him to help him progress. There is no question in my mind that this is the right school format for us. I would be devastated if it were to become unavailable to us.

Sincerely,

Robin

Thankful Cyber School Mom



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Brenda

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

My son has succeeded in PA Virtual and by its own admission, my local school district was not able to academically challenge him with appropriate curriculum. He would not be the successful student he is today if he was enrolled in our local school district.

Sincerely,

Brenda
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Kimberlee

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I chose an online school after my children's private school closed and I had entered them into a public school. In the cyber school setting, there is no bullying, like what my children endured in the brick and mortar school setting. My children enjoy the setting of the online school and the teachers. I enjoy not having to worry about them being in a school and a threat being made, or them being on lock down until the uncertainty is figured out of is the threat real this time? Those types of school really scare me anymore with all the school shootings that have been going on. I want to know my children are safe each and every day and not have to be stressed out worrying. My child is getting a great education with PA Virtual and I wouldn't have it any other way.

The teachers, staff and students at PA Virtual are excellent and will over extend themselves in order to help any child. I have my 4th and 5th child in the school at this time. My 1st, 2nd, and 3rd children graduated already from PA Virtual, with my 1st and 2nd graduating 1 year early, in 11th grade. I could not see my children ever going to any other type of school besides a cyber school due to the excellent learning experience they get and my nerves are at ease knowing that I don't have to worry about their safety because they are all right beside me, in our own home. The funding should not be cut in any way from the areas that we live in for the cyber schools. Our children are getting the same type of education, only in a home based atmosphere, which is a much safer option than the brick and mortar type. Everyone has their own opinion on where their children should go, but as for mine I wouldn't have it any other way.

Sincerely,

Kimberlee

Proud parent of 5 PA Virtual students and 1 more that is almost of age for school that will be a PA Virtual student also.



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Robert

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

We choose PA Virtual due to ongoing bullying at my sons' elementary school. We had contacted his teachers, but nothing changed. My son has a weight issue and is seeing specialists to try and help. We were not going to stand by and watch him hate to go the public schools and enrolled him in PA Virtual. He still has friends outside of school but does not live in constant fear of being picked on and verbally abused. Adult friends have seen the change for the better in him since leaving public schooling.

We feel it should be our choice where we send our children to school. We know Yough School District is against online schooling. But maybe if they did a better job at running their school district and their spending they would not have to worry about cyber schools.

Sincerely,

Robert

Proud Parent of a Cyber School Student



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Cindy

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I personally have CHOSEN to teach with PA Virtual for nearly 14 years as I love the way I can work with students, collaborate, innovate and form lasting and connected relationships with my students.

The other thing I would like to point out, is that if I can choose to go to a different grocery store other than the one that is in my town, I would not expect, nor would anyone stand for, that grocery store keeping my hard earned money when I did not buy my food there. It is called competition and choice! Resident school districts ALREADY keep around 25% of the tax dollars for each child that comes to our school anyway (for "overhead"), which is like getting paid to do nothing, so why should they be allowed to keep more? Personally, I would think they would be happy to get "paid" to do nothing. But what is really the issue is that students and families are CHOOSING to go to other schools and that is hurting their bottom line. That is NOT what is in the best interest of the child and their needs. If it truly is a choice, then it needs to be supported, valued, and funded as one.

Sincerely,

Cindy



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Erika

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and members of the Senate Education Committee;

I am very happy to have all my four kids attending online school. I think it is much easier to have them at home and supervising them. In addition, it is easier because I work a 9 to 5 job and my mother watches them while they are in school. We share the role of learning support coach. Which works for this family. I also choose online schooling for safety issues. Where I live isn't the best area and I feel if I sent them to a brick and mortar school I would worry about their safety and from hearing how the primary school are doing doesn't make me feel comfortable for them to attend there. I have also experienced it for myself with my own kids at a time when they did attend traditional schooling. My daughters were being bullied a lot and high school kids can be tough at that age.

I am really impressed by the teachers on the online schooling. They are very attentive and they are always informing me if the kids are late for class and they are missing assignments. They really care about the students, when my daughter was failing a course the teacher was able to offer additional help to help her get her grade back up. I am happy with the progress the kids have made. Also providing everything that the children need is great whether it was textbooks, or printers, art supplies everything was provided for them. Which I feel is very beneficial so they still have that support just like in a real class setting. I feel it was the right decision to put them in online school and I will continue to support online schooling. Thanks PA Virtual.

Sincerely,

Erika
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Jacqui

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

Our son Brian was having trouble in school. Every other day we were at the school when he was in 3rd grade. At the end of March we were told that he had difficulties with math class and thought he should be seen by a counselor or psychologists to help with his problems. We heard of PA Virtual Charter School through friends of ours and we set up an appointment with the Dean and were very impressed by everything about the school. We did take our son to central to have him seen at counseling to find how we could better help our son. We found out that he has ADD and general anxiety. The school program for our son has worked tremendously for his self confidence and he loves the school. PA Virtual Charter School has been a great help with our son and his advancement in his classes. The teachers are great and they have the time to give the students rather than being in the regular school system. My son had straight A's last year in tenth grade! We are so proud of him and grateful that Brian is enrolled in PA Virtual!

Sincerely,

Jacqueline



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Christine

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I love PA Virtual! My son gets the education and challenges he needs without distraction. It has really helped his focus to be able to learn in the manner that PA Virtual lays out and offers. I love it and am very happy with it.

Sincerely,

Christine



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Krystal

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

We choose PA Virtual Charter School so we can be involved and present in the education of our daughter because the quality of education is more personal. We as the parents have control over the environment and know what will work for our daughter and know that she is safe. We love that we have the flexibility to do school anywhere we choose to that day. We control what values our daughter is learning. We love the fact that the teachers believe in our daughter and that she knows she can do anything. She is chasing her dreams and not test scores. We love that we can add in our Christian values to educate our daughter daily because that is important to us as a family.

Sincerely,

Krystal
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Glenys

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

PA Virtual was the best choice for me because the violence at the school created an insecure environment. PA Virtual's education is high quality. They provide the tools necessary to be successful in class and teachers and staff are always available to help students.

Sincerely,

Glenys
Proud PA Virtual parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Monique

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I choose PA Virtual Charter School because I believe as of right now the way they teach in these public schools is unacceptable. The other charter schools make it so hard to be accepted in to their schools. PA Virtual has been the best fit and match for my child. She has been in this school since kindergarten. My child has improved a lot. She reads on a high grade level and her work has improved a lot. I love the way that the teachers are very caring for the students and they do their best in helping out whatever way they can. My child is currently in the first grade and she loves this school in every way. I would give this school the best rating – 100%. I definitely would recommend this school to anyone as I'm doing now. So, yes, I'm a proud PA Virtual mom and so is my daughter

Sincerely,

Monique

I'm a Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Cheryl

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I believe strongly in Cyber Charter Schools.

Sincerely,

Cheryl
Proud PA Virtual parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Doreen

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I pleased with PA Virtual Cyber Charter School.

Sincerely,

Doreen
Proud Parent



630 PARK AVENUE, KING OF PRUSSIA, PA 19406
TOLL FREE: 866.728.2751 | PHONE: 610.275.8500
WWW.PAVCSK12.ORG

October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Lisa

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I'm new to PA Virtual, but so far my daughter enjoys the classes. I decided to take my daughter out of regular school because we didn't think school was safe anymore. Now my daughter is getting the attention she needs and can focus on her school work without interruption. This was the right choice for me and her.

Sincerely,

Lisa



PAVIRTUAL
CHARTER SCHOOL

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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Barbara

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

PA Virtual was the right choice for our child because he was having health issues. This gave him the opportunity to be in a class, but do it from home and allow his immune system to catch up and be stronger. Our son also needed to be challenged, and have the opportunity to work ahead and reach his highest potential. Not to be held back and placed in classes that would hold him back, just because he has some special needs. We choose to place our son in PA Virtual, when we didn't get the help from our own school district. Public School Districts want to push the kids through even though they graduate not knowing what they need to know to succeed in life. The teachers in Public Schools are to the point that they won't stop bullying in the class room because they fear what will happen. The Public Schools seem to think that the parents shouldn't have a say in their child's education. But parents should be involved 100% in their child's education from start to finish. Parents need to step up and do what is right for their child. They need to make their child be responsible if they make a bad choice not blame it on the teachers.

We love being at PA Virtual School and I have seen my child achieve things that we didn't think he ever would. He loves school now and loves to be in class. He socializes with other kids in class and has the opportunity to do clubs and be involved.

I am a big part of my child's education and a very strict Learning Coach. I love the teachers we have had an opportunity to get to know. They are not scared to do their jobs and really teach the kids. They are always going beyond what is expected of them and stop bullying in the class room. The teachers make the learning fun, so your child wants to be involved and do the work. I have always said since getting into this school, I wish I would have had these opportunities as a kid and maybe I would have enjoyed school more. This school gives children who have special needs the opportunity to get an education, that they don't get in a Public School setting. We need more Schools like PA Virtual, so every child has the same opportunities. We need more teachers who want to make school fun and keep kids engaged to want to learn. I love hearing from my son's teachers how much they love to have him in class. PA needs to support more schools like this, and keep the funding coming so that we can see more kids graduate from PA Virtual. This school has a lot of children who graduate and become very successful in life and feel good about themselves knowing that they have what it takes. Because they got that love and encouragement and support from their teachers and parents at PA Virtual. Thank You for your time.

Sincerely,

Barbara

Very Proud Parent of my Senior Son

A COMMUNITY OF PARTNERSHIP, LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Jason

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I have two children ages 11 and 13. They were both abused as infants, prior to their adoptions and suffer from major behavioral and mental health issues. PA Virtual has an async program that allows us to complete their schooling, while also allowing space for their issues. In the brick and mortar school, both children were on the verge of expulsion. At PA Virtual, both my children are A and B students and will be able to graduate with honors. This is because the async program allows us to cater to their needs and complete school work at the optimal times each day and night.

Sincerely,

Jason
Parent of 2 PA Virtual Students



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Victoria

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I have 2 children in PA Virtual Charter School. They are both in the high school system, a freshmen and a sophomore. My children have been through so much in their young lives, from people leaving and blaming them to being homeless. My children needed stability in their lives, especially when we didn't know where we could go and even sleep. I figured if I could get them into a school where no matter if we were sitting in a homeless shelter, they would at least have the same teachers and classmates. Also, the teachers and classmates wouldn't know where they slept last night and it would make life a little easier. My children were in a standard brick and mortar school, and as soon as the other kids found out what was going on, they started bullying both of my kids, which they didn't need.

We have since moved in with my aunt. Even though they could go to Uniontown where no one knows them they have both said that "If we even have to go back to a brick and mortar school, we will drop out or make the school kick us out." The major reasons why I chose cyber school for them are: 1. We don't have transportation, so if they get sick they're stuck. 2. I don't have money for school clothes or other school needs. 3. The safety of our home with the shootings and bullying. 4. They both have a service dog, which puts them out of brick and mortar anyways. 5. They both have IEPs that truly work for them. 6. The classes they can take for their future careers.

Sincerely,

Victoria

Proud Parent of 2 PA Virtual High School Students that have been to Hell and Back



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Star

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

I have chosen online school for my child for the purpose that I can teach him and make sure he gets all the help he needs and when he needs it. I have chosen not to send my son to a public school due to issues I've had in that past with a pre-k program. My son struggles with speech. I feel more comfortable being in charge to make sure my son gets all the right help that is available. Its my job to make sure my child understands everything that is being taught to them. Like my son will tell me he understands something when I know he doesn't so I can go back and work slower on certain thing with him to make sure he is understanding everything that is being taught. There is so much more but I think this will help you out with some thoughts that go on in my mind when im trying to make sure my son gets everything he can.

Sincerely,

Star
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Christiane

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

The reason that I chose a virtual charter school, is a simple one. Steelton-Highspire School District has been one of the WORST School Districts for education, for the last 20 years! I graduated from there in 1998, and it has consistently gone downhill since then. They boast a good education, but they've always put their funding towards sports instead of educational materials. They did it while I was in high school. Our grammar books were from the 1970's, and we STILL used those outdated books back in the 1990's! They've consistently had scandals that have been reported on the news, so they can't say that it's hearsay when people bring up the \$52,000 embezzled by the superintendent's secretary, or the incidents where teachers were having affairs with their students. The behavioral problems are another issue, and the racism and discrimination towards white kids at that school, is out of control. I can say this, if virtual charter schools would've been an option when I was a student there, I would've jumped at the chance to attend one. I was bullied from 7th-12th grade, just because I was intelligent and kept to myself.

I chose PA Virtual after comparing their curriculum to other virtual charter schools. My son had attended Hershey School District for 5 years, where the Common Core curriculum kept him, in plain words, stupid. At PA Virtual, he has gotten a better education and will now be better prepared for what comes after high school.

Having virtual charter schools as an option, is imperative for students in school districts who insist on misappropriating their funds and giving their students, what can only be described as, a "bare minimum education." I would rather my tax dollars be put towards a stellar education for the children of this state, than be put towards school board lunches, school sports, and whatever else the school districts are wasting money on. Virtual charter schools need to continue to be funded by tax dollars. Kids NEED better education options. The fact that parents are pulling their kids out of brick & mortar schools, and enrolling them in virtual charter schools, speaks volumes as to how far the public educational system has fallen. It's not like the PA Department of Education cares about the students anymore, just look up the case where Highspire tried to break away from Steelton to split up the district, and how the Department of Education ruled in favor of the school district because of monetary reasons. They didn't put education first, they put money first. That's unacceptable! While you're weighing your decision about charter schools, you may want to "clean house" at the Department of Education.

The children are our future, and the future looks dim if the kids aren't receiving a top notch education.

Sincerely,

Christiane
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Christine

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

PA Virtual is a awesome online school for my daughte. The teachers are absolutely awesome and are always willing to help my child if she is struggling in any subject. They offer after school hours and extra help if needed. I was referred to PA Virtual from a friend that had her two daughters enrolled due to problems they had in school and I am happy she referred me here. My daughter was homeschooled due to bullying in 5th grade and she has been with PA Virtual since 6th grade til present. We love PA Virtual and everything about the program, teachers, and staff. Everyone is awesome and I think they are the best charter school that I know. I refer anyone that we know to PA Virtual, based on my experience and when I tell them, they are very happy. I think they should keep charter schools. They are great for any child if they just choose to be homeschooled or for problems in regular school. I have all positive things to say about PA Virtual and they care about your child. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to let you know how I feel.

Sincerely,

Christine
Proud PA Virtual Parent



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Suchada

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

My child has more time during the day to focus on activity and lessons, that encourage learning. In most public schools, there is a lot of pressure being placed on kids, More and more, kids are becoming stressed and lose confidence. The parent support group at PA Virtual help gives help to one another by providing recommendations for the way to take the curriculum to the next level.

Sincerely,

Suchada

We're so proud of PA Virtual!!!



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October 15, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Beverly

Dear Senator Langerholc, Chairman, and the members of the Senate Education Committee;

My daughter chose an online school because of the quality she felt that her son at the time could benefit from. He had come from a public school and he just wasn't able to understand his work. Although he tried very hard, the passion just wasn't there for him. When he graduated his teacher suggested that he could benefit from a school that dealt more of an individual care and could work much better for him. Her and I began searching for online schools. Then we heard of the many achievements of PA Virtual on TV so she enrolled him into the school. This was such a great move the school tested him for ADHD he had classes that were much better for him and he adores it. Fast Forward the next year I enrolled my daughter who is a diabetic and she likes the school and this year we enrolled the remainder of my two children here and they are learning much easier. The teachers are consistent in making sure that all resources and avenues are being used so that the children can achieve. Also, the wealth of resources for parents is amazing. I am an advocate for this school and I tell everyone that I come in contact about this school and their endeavors about learning. I am a learning coach and it is great.

Sincerely,

Beverly

Proud grandparent/learning coach of 4 at PA Virtual

ADVERTISEMENT

Quakertown looks to close two schools, furlough 50 staff to make ends meet

by [Kathy Boccella, Staff Writer](#), Posted: April 5, 2017

After 30 years of nonstop property-tax increases, the superintendent of the Quakertown Community School District says only one way is left to balance the books: Immediately shut down an aging middle school, close an elementary school next year, end an expensive cyber-learning program, and furlough 50 teachers and other staff.

William Harner calls his plan to save his Upper Bucks district "a paradigm shift." Some parents are using much less kind words to describe it.

RELATED STORIES

- **Philly teachers: District windfall should mean new contract**
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- **Key Pa. senator under fire for suggesting inner-city students need 'less intensive' program to succeed**

"We were blindsided completely," said Emily George. She is sending her two children to different elementary schools because of Quakertown's last redistricting and now may have to send one of them, a third grader who is on the autism spectrum, to yet another school. She called Harner's proposed solution to the district's \$4.8 million budget gap "horrible."

The fiscal strife in the district, encompassing a mostly blue-collar community between Philadelphia and Allentown where more than a quarter of the 5,240 public school students live in poverty, is a jarring example of what administrators regionwide are facing: large structural budget gaps that aren't going away, even as the overall economy improves and headlines about a state education-funding crisis fade.

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"Many districts have still not recovered from the Great Recession," said Mark DiRocco, executive director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA).

He estimates that one-third of the state's districts continue to slash programs and faculty positions or increase class sizes to make ends meet. The biggest culprits, DiRocco said, are skyrocketing teacher pension costs and the failure of state and federal school aid to keep pace.

INQUIRER MORNING NEWSLETTER

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Another Bucks district, Pennsbury, is laboring to close a \$5 million budget gap, for instance. Delaware County's Chichester district, one of several troubled systems profiled in a February report by PASA and the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, has cut staff for six straight years. The same report noted that 77 percent of Pennsylvania's 500 districts raised property taxes this year.

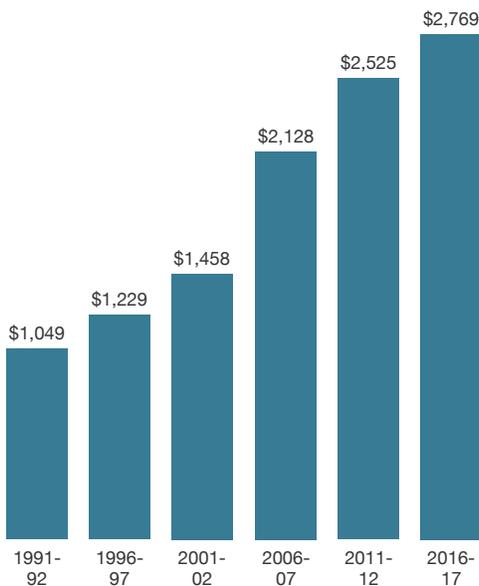
Indeed, the ongoing school budget gaps are more starkly exposing the differences between affluent suburbs and older struggling towns. In Lower Merion Township, one of Pennsylvania's wealthiest communities, district administrators sought exemptions to raise property taxes above the state-legislated 3 percent cap more often than any other district over the last decade. Last year, Lower Merion lost a lawsuit over its high tax rate and a judge ordered a refund of some of its 2016-17 increase. The district has appealed.

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Quakertown is the only district in Bucks County, and one of just a handful in the region, that has raised its real estate levy annually for the last 30 years. Even when adjusted for inflation, it has soared more than 40 percent over the last 15 years. School board members say they're not willing to seek state permission to raise taxes higher than the maximum allowed under the 2006 property-tax relief legislation, Pennsylvania Act 1. That, they say, is not a viable option for a community with a 28 percent poverty rate.

School Taxes Keep Rising in Quakertown

Quakertown is the only district in Bucks County that has raised taxes every year for at least 25 consecutive years. Here are the annual **school district median tax bills** for a Quakertown residence assessed at the borough median, \$18,000. The median tax bill has risen by 164 percent since the 1991-92 school year. By contrast, from 1989 to 2015, median household income in Quakertown rose by only 63 percent.



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Tax Equalization Division, Inquirer analysis

Staff Graphic

"Taxpayers are going, 'When are you *not* going to raise taxes for a change?' " said Paul Stepanoff, president of the school board, which has scheduled a hearing for Tuesday to discuss the closing of Milford Middle School.

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Harner said his impossible mission this winter was to devise a spending plan that didn't massively raise taxes or eat up the district's cash reserves, yet preserved popular programs such as athletics and the arts.

His proposed furloughs would affect four principals, 37 teachers, and as many as nine support staffers over two years, although next year's reductions are expected to be handled through attrition. The full-time staff would number 501 in the 2018-19 school year, down from 625 in 2007-08.

What requires more immediate action, he said, are time-worn school facilities such as Milford, where science labs are outdated and the heater is ready to give out.

"We're in a Catch-22 because of how tight our funds are," Harner said, noting the district will also likely need to close either Quakertown or Tohickon Elementary Schools in 2018 while maintaining the financial ability to begin building a new one. If a new elementary is opened, the other aging grade school would be shut.

The options he has presented to the school board include moving some of the students now at Milford to available space at the district's Freshman Center and Strayer Middle School, with the installation of some modular classrooms -- still cheaper than the \$10 million required to bring Milford up to code.

In addition, Harner said, a closer look at Quakertown's cyber-learning program – viewed as a money-saver when it was launched a couple of years ago – showed it is actually costing the district \$700,000 a year; some teachers get paid for online classes with only three or four students. "It's not efficient for us," said the superintendent, who also seeks to eliminate a \$600,000 eighth-grade "Team Time" program, a daily period during which teachers can work with students, parents, and one another.

Quakertown parents don't necessarily blame Harner. The district's cash crunch, they note, existed before he arrived in 2014. But many aren't pleased with the plan, taking to Facebook to post complaints. The biggest concerns are over the chaos of closing schools and redistricting.

"Milford looks like a prison, but to the kids, it's their school," George said. She and other parents also questioned some of Quakertown's recent spending decisions. "Why did they spend millions of dollars on the land for a new middle school" before construction was put on hold, she asked. "They also put Astroturf on the football field and renovated the high school."

Ryan Wieand, president of the teachers' union in Quakertown, said his worry about the looming cuts was their speed: "They're doing it very fast, without considering the impact it's going to have on kids." Wieand said he's especially concerned that the furloughs will eliminate reading and instruction specialists who work with the neediest kids, and that middle-school consolidation could mean larger classes and overcrowding in sports and other activities.

Others in the school community note that under Harner's leadership, the high school has the top state School Performance Profile score in Bucks County – above more upscale neighbors – and a plethora of Advanced Placement courses.

"Sometimes these tough decisions are hard to swallow, but in the end, it will be better for the schools and the kids," said Denise Moyer, a mother of two whose older child will be in ninth grade next fall and could be affected by crowding at the Freshman Center. "They're not cutting sports, or lots of great things that they instituted."



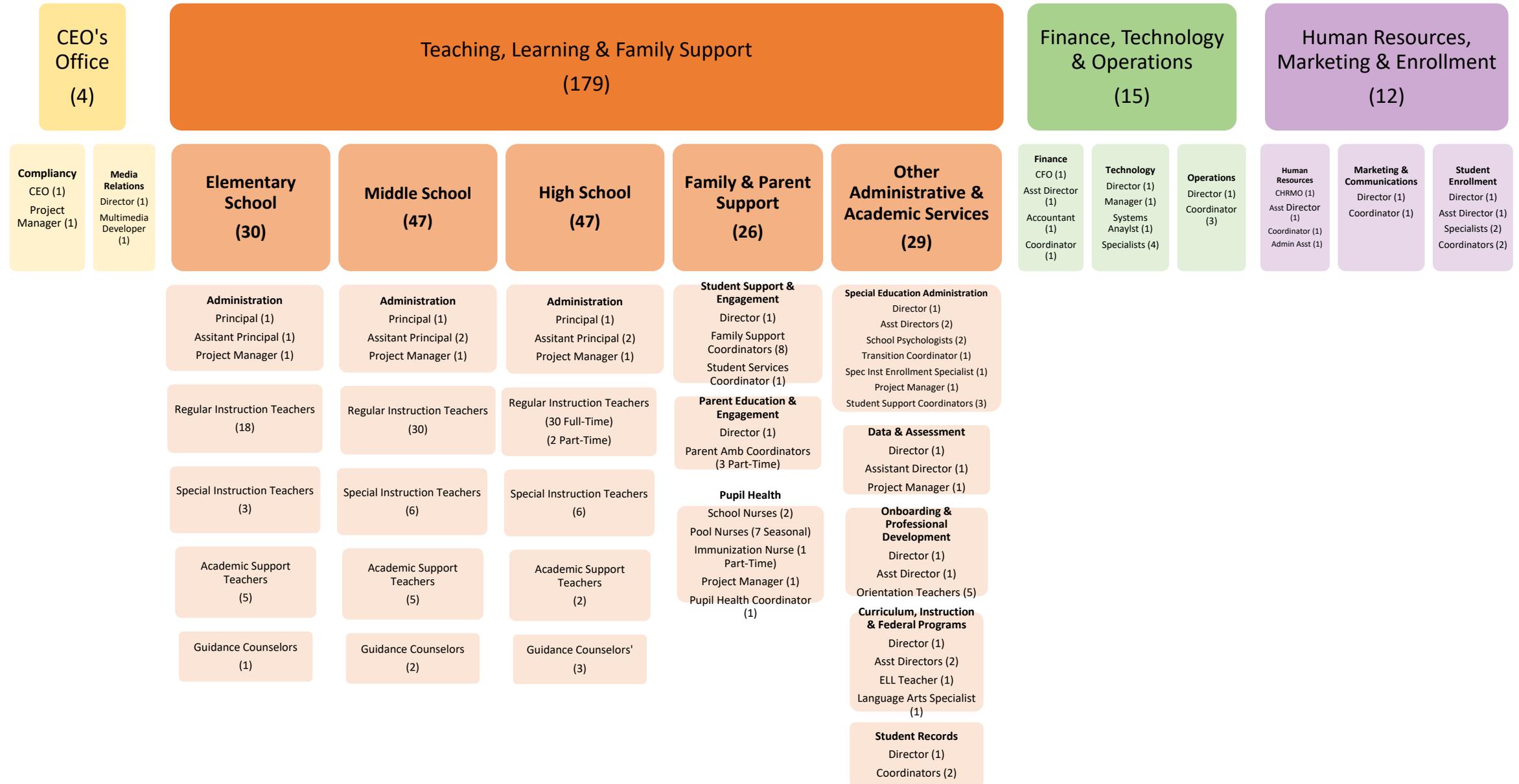
Posted: April 5, 2017 - 5:00 AM

Kathy Boccella, Staff Writer | [@Kathy_Boccella](#) | kboccella@inquirer.com

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PA Virtual Charter School

(197 Full-Time, 6 Part-Time, 7 Seasonal)



Accountability & Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools

Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools are held to a higher level of accountability than all other Public Schools. As Local Education Agencies, they are held to the same state and federal mandates as all other public schools. In addition, Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools are accountable to:

- ◆ The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) which authorizes Cyber Charter Schools.
- ◆ Their respective Charter Authorizer, either PDE or their local School District(s).
- ◆ The individual parents and families who choose Public Charter Schools to help their children achieve their goals.

Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools List of Annual Reports

CHARTER RENEWAL			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
Charter Renewal Application	Renewal application for continued operation and service to students and families.	Authorizers	Every 3-5 years

FINANCIAL			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
Independent Audit Report	Report by Independent Auditing Firm affirming the fair presentation of all financial statements.	Board of Trustees, Public, Authorizer	Annually
990 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax	990 Return Report of operational expenses. Explaining how and where our money has been spent.	Department of Treasury IRS, Public	Annually
Annual Financial Report (AFR)	Report details Profit & Loss Income Statement and Balance Sheet for the school.	PDE	Annually
Form W3 Transmittal of Wage and Tax Statements	A summary of totals we paid and taxes withheld within our organization.	Department of Treasury; Internal Revenue Service	Annually
General Fund Budget	Report details the budget for the school.	PDE, Authorizer(s), Public	Annually
Notice of Adoption of Policies, Procedures and Use of Funds by Charter School	Required forms to obtain IDEA Part B funding. Comes from/sent to respective Intermediate Unit from the respective Chief Financial Officer or Business Manager.	Respective Intermediate Unit	Annually

STATE-MANDATED TESTING			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
District Verification Report	Provides the LEA an opportunity to review the number of students at the district-level matched to Test Records that will be included in specific subgroups for accountability reporting (e.g., ethnicity, English Learner status, economically disadvantaged, Title IA, etc.).	PDE	Annually
Test Administrator Schedules and Certifications	Reports test administrators testing locations and certifications.	PDE	3 times per year
PSSA Update - Accountability: PSSA Accountability Reporting	Verification of students and student demographics of students who tested with the school.	PDE	Annually

HEALTH			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
School Health Annual Reimbursement Request System (SHARRS)	Pupil health budget, record of illnesses/injuries, exam dates, immunization reports, nursing staff salary & certifications.	PA Department of Health	Annually
School Health Personnel Immunization and Disease Reporting (SILR)	Record of Immunization Compliancy.	PA Department of Health	Annually

Accountability & Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools

Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools List of Annual Reports

SCHOOL-WIDE			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
ACT 44 of 2018 Annual Report	This report is an informal report of any items related to ACT 44 of 2018 (School Safety and Security) that have occurred or changed throughout the school year.	Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency	Annually
Annual Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Notice	This notification is provided to families informing them of their rights as they relate to the student's academic records and how we protect the student's academic records.	Public	Annually
Charter School Annual Report	Board meeting dates, number of staff by category, audit information, Federal Program report, Special Education report, Special Education Professional Development, Special Education Program Profile, Fixed Assets, Capital Needs.	PDE, Authorizer(s)	Annually
Civil Rights Data Collection	This report collects a variety of information including student enrollment and educational programs and services, most of which is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, limited English proficiency, and disability.	Federal Office of Civil Rights	Bi-Annually
Comprehensive Plan	Comprehensive strategic plan to increase student performance and achievement.	PDE, Public	3-Year Cycle
Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Program Survey	To ensure compliance with Chapter 4.26- reporting Chapter 4.26 assurances, assessments, language(s) for Bilingual program models, teacher counts, budget information.	PDE	Annually
Non-Career Technical Education (CTE) Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE)	Current Year; Student-Non-CTE Work based Learning Experiences.	PDE	Annually
Statement of Financial Interest	In order to comply with the annual financial disclosure requirements of the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act, we are required to have Board Members and employees complete the Statement of Financial Interest Form each year the position is held and the year after leaving the position.	Kept internally; not submitted	Annually

FACULTY			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
Professional Educational Plan (Professional Development)	Part of the Comprehensive Plan, complete report of how the LEA meets guidelines for the PDE; approved Professional Development Plan aligned with Comprehensive and School-wide Plans to improve student achievement.	PDE	Every 3 years
Teacher and Principal Evaluation Survey	Report of aggregate data on instructional staff evaluation practices.	PDE	Annually
PSERS Reporting	Report on all staff earnings and employer contributions.	Public School Employees Retirement System	Monthly, Quarterly, Annually
403B Reporting	Report on all staff earnings and employer contributions.	403B Vendor	Monthly, Quarterly, Annually

GUIDANCE			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY)	Completed when the LEA applied for a general education student to be placed.	PDE	Annually
Safe Schools - Student Assistance Program Report	Demographic information for all students discussed during a Student Assistance Program (SAP) meeting.	PDE	Annually
Transportation Plan for Foster Care Youth	Report of transportation for foster care youth.	PDE	Annually

Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools List of Annual Reports

SPECIAL EDUCATION			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
Annual Special Education (SPED) Notice	The purpose of this Annual Notice is to comply with the Charter School's obligations under Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code and to describe: (1) the types of disabilities that might qualify the child for special education; (2) the special education programs and related services that are available; (3) the process by which the Charter School screens and evaluates such students to determine eligibility; (4) the special rights that pertain to such children and their parents or legal guardians; and (5) the confidentiality rights that pertain to student information.	Public	Annually
Child Find Notice	Child Find Notice is legal requirement that schools find all child who have disabilities and who may be entitled to special education services. Child Find covers all children from birth to 21.	Public	Annually
Comparison Reports Table 1-3 & 13	Report run in PASDM that compares Tables 1-3 & 13 for current year against previous year. Requires explanation for significant changes in percent of student population to be submitted to the Intermediate Unit.	IU/Penn Data, PA State Data Manager (PASDM)	Annually
Deaf-Blind Census	Reporting all students with the eligibility of both Deafness and Blindness.	PDE	Annually
Federal Quota Registration of Blind Students	Annual registration of students who are eligible to receive materials provided by the Federal Act to Promote the Education of the Blind.	PaTTAN	Annually
PASA Registration	Verify 1% PASA Eligible students.	PDE	Annually
PASA Mandated Participation Waiver Application	Under the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements, a LEA must complete and submit a PASA Mandated Participation Waiver Application if it anticipates exceeding the one percent participation cap during the school year.	Bureau of Special Education	Annually
Penn Data Table 8A	Tracks Special Education Initial Evaluations to ensure compliance with the 60 day timeline requirement.	Intermediate Unit	Cyclical - every 6 years
Penn Data Table 9a	Amount of disciplinary removals (suspensions, expulsion, unilateral removals) during school year; Special Education Students Only.	IU/Penn Data	Annually
Special Education 12/1 Count	Reporting all special education students with a valid Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as of 12/1 of the current school year.	PDE	Annually
Special Education Act 16 -- Services cost per student	For the previous school year, this report identifies the educational expenditure cost range for each student with disabilities. The expenditure range is based on the total cost of the student's special education program directed by an IEP for the entire school year.	PDE	Annually
Special Education End of Year	Reporting all students who exited special education during the current school year. New for 2016-2017; also, reporting all students in transitional IEP services ages 14 and up.	PDE	Annually
Special Education Restraints (RISC)	Reporting number of incidents of Special Education student restraints being utilized.	Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education	Quarterly
Special Education Transitions/Exits; Collection	Special Education Transitions/Exits from School to Work. Based upon student's IEP.	PDE	Annually

Accountability & Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools

Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools List of Annual Reports

FEDERAL PROGRAMS			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
Federal Program Monitoring	Review and audit of title expenditures, LEA management of Title grant, and accountability for federal funds.	PDE	Every 3-4 years
Right to Know Letter	School's receiving Title I funding are required to inform parents of their right to know the qualifications of the teachers and paraprofessionals who instruct their students. This letter outlines this right and is to be posted on the school website in both English and Spanish.	Public	Annually
Title I Certification of Single-Funded Federal Employees or PDE 414	Documentation via time and effort logs for staff fully funded by federal funds	PDE	Semi-Annually
Title I Comparability Report	Exemption to report that shows how LEA provides state and local resources in Title I schools that are comparable to the services provided in non-Title I schools.	PDE	Annually
Title I Final Expenditure Report (for previous grant year)	Final report of use of Title I funds.	PDE	Annually
Title I Monthly Activity Report for Split-time Employees	Documentation of staff partially funded using federal funds.	PDE	Monthly
Title I School-wide Plan	Detailed action plan to increase student achievement; this is part of the Comprehensive Plan.	PDE	Annually
Uniform Grants Guidance Performance Goal Output Report	Accountability report of progress toward performance goals outlined in school wide plan.	PDE	Annually

PENNSYLVANIA INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PIMS)			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
ACCESS for English Language Learners Accountability	Local Education Agency (LEA) must update data on Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Title III LEP students enrolled during the ACCESS 2.0/Alternate ACCESS for English Language Learners testing window. The director of EL (English Language) reports students who enrolled for the ACCESS test for EL students; any updates/changes reported to PIMS ongoing through due date.	PDE	Annually
ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS Precode	LEAs update demographic data for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, to provide data to Data Recognition Corps. (DRC) to produce precode labels and populate WIDA Assessment Management System (AMS) for ACCESS 2.0/Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessments.	PDE	Annually
Career Standards Benchmarks	Student-Career Standards Benchmarks	PDE	Annually
Collections 1 Programs Fact Template	This template is used to track participation for specific state and federal programs. The template is required only for schools with any of the tracked programs.	PDE	Annually
Collections 1 Staff Professional and Support	Accountability report that delineates instructional staff and assignments (instructional areas, additional responsibilities). Cumulative record of all staff (terminated and non-terminated).	PDE	Annually
Collections 1 Title I Student Template	LEA will submit the students educated by the LEA for one or more classes on the first business day in October, providing data; indicating the economically disadvantaged status of a student, providing the official low-income count for Teach Loan Forgiveness program; collect data for LEP students enrolled; Special Education students; Title III served students enrolled; students meeting the Title III definition of immigrant.	PDE	Annually

Accountability & Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools

Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools List of Annual Reports

PENNSYLVANIA INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PIMS) - Continued			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
Collections 1 October Student	Mandated by the federal government to be collected on an annual basis, this data is used at the federal level to analyze program participation and to guide policy and programmatic decisions at the national, state and local level. The aggregate LEA data reported is from the prior school year and includes participation in instructional and support services for Targeted programs, participation counts by Targeted and School Wide program, ethnicity, grade, special needs and staffing data by program type.	PDE	Annually
Child Accounting End-of-Year	Collects attendance and membership data for each student throughout the school year. The membership data is used in the calculation of state subsidies and used in the calculation of each school district's tuition rate.	PDE	Annually
Child Accounting (kindergarten starting age)	Provides the last date on which a student may meet the minimum required age for entry into the earliest kindergarten program.	PDE	Annually
Course/Instructor Report	Report administrators can view the results of individual courses per instructor. The instructor course reports supply evaluation results for each course an instructor is assigned to, separately--this is unlike the summary report, which displays a summary of all of the data associated with that instructor. Course reports provide results in a quantitative, qualitative, and segment comparison report view.	PDE	Annually
Course/Instructor Report	Report administrators can view the results of individual courses per instructor. The instructor course reports supply evaluation results for each course an instructor is assigned to, separately--this is unlike the summary report, which displays a summary of all of the data associated with that instructor. Course reports provide results in a quantitative, qualitative, and segment comparison report view.	PDE	Annually
ELL/Immigrant End of Year Counts	Snapshot: Student and School Enrollment Template updates throughout the year. Must be updated by 12:00pm on August 15 to be included in the Internal Snapshot.	PDE	Annually
Grade 11 Keystone Accountability	Snapshot: Student, School Enrollment, Programs Fact must be updated by 12:00 noon on May 30 to be included in the Internal Snapshot, must reflect accurate May 24, 2019 data in Student, School Enrollment and Programs Fact.	PDE	Annually
Graduation/Drop Cohort by School Year	Report explains how many students graduated, and didn't from the previous school year.	PDE	Annually
Homeless Student Report	Updates for students who are currently homeless and need extra support.	PDE	Monthly
Interscholastic Athletic Opportunities	Interscholastic Athletic Opportunities.	PDE	Annually
Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Survey	Planned English language development instruction by a qualified ESL/Bilingual Education teacher, and adaptations/modifications in the delivery of content instruction and assessments by all teachers based on students' language proficiency levels and the Pennsylvania English Language Development Standards (PA ELDS) Framework for ELs as well as the Pennsylvania academic standards.	PDE	Annually

Accountability & Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools

Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools List of Annual Reports

PENNSYLVANIA INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PIMS) - Continued			
Type of Report	Description	Recipient	Frequency
PATI - Pennsylvania Technology Inventory - LEA Collection	Annual data collection for technology-related data, gathered through a variety of surveys. Used for required federal and state technology reporting, as well as providing data to the LEA to be used to plan for the strategic use of local technology resources.	PDE	Annually
Precode for Winter Keystone - Updates	Snapshot: Report of student demographics for eligible students to test.	PDE	Annually
PSSA Precodes	Snapshot: Report of student demographics for eligible students to test.	PDE	Annually
PSSA Accountability Reporting for English Language Arts	Snapshot: Verification of students and student demographics who tested with the school.	PDE	Annually
PSSA Accountability Reporting for Mathematics	Verification of students and student demographics who tested with the school.	PDE	Annually
PSSA Accountability Reporting for Science	Verification of students and student demographics who tested with the school.	PDE	Annually
Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS) Student Roster Verification Gap	Roster Verification	PDE	Annually
PVAAS (Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System) Student/Staff	Data pull of staff and students. Staff and Student and School Enrollment templates Needs to be updated for the internal snapshot to create student and staff accounts.	PDE	Annually
PVAAS (Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System) – Staff/Student Subtest (PVAAS)	Accounts for teacher instructional responsibility and relationship weights in preparing students for Keystone and PSSAs. This report provides data for SPP and PVAAS reporting.	PDE	Annually
Safe Schools Report	Reporting LEA Habitual truants in aggregate data, Bullying Prevention statement, and reporting all school safety and security incidents.	PDE	Annually
Safe Schools - Bus Evacuation	Bus Evacuation Drill.	PDE	Annually
Safe Schools - Fire & Security Drills	Fire & Security Drill.	PDE	Annually
School Enrollment Template	This is part of the October 1 Collection (staff and student).	PDE	Annually
School Performance Profile	Snapshot: Updates to templates.	PDE	Annually
Spring Keystone Precodes - Updates	Snapshot: Report of student demographics for eligible students to test.	PDE	Annually
Spring Keystone Reporting	Internal Snapshot: Reporting students that take the Spring Keystone assessment test.	PDE	Annually
Student - Local Assessment - Updates	Student Local assessment.	PDE	Annually
Student - Industry Recognized Credentials and Work-Based Learning	A template/collection indicating what students have participated in earning industry recognized credentials.	PDE	Annually
Winter Keystone Reporting - Updates	Snapshot of submitted data.	PDE	Annually



Cost Considerations

of Pennsylvania's Public Cyber Charter Schools

498 of 500

PA's Public Cyber Charter Schools serve students in 498 of Pennsylvania's 500 School Districts.

SOURCE: Self Reported Enrollment Data.

49.7%

Percent of PA's Public Cyber Charter Schools' student enrollment who are considered Economically Disadvantaged.

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Department of Education. Future Ready Index. Data Files. School Fast Facts.

21.8%

Percent of PA's Public Cyber Charter Schools' student enrollment who utilize Special Education Support Services versus 15.9% for all other Public Schools.

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Department of Education. Future Ready Index. Data Files. School Fast Facts.

\$2,653

Average amount LESS received by PA's Public Cyber Charter Schools per student than traditional public schools.

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Department of Education. AFR Data Files. Detailed AFR Data. Revenues; 2017-2018.

Pennsylvania's 15 Public Cyber Charter Schools provide a high quality, individualized education to over 34,000 students from 498 of Pennsylvania's 500 School Districts.

Pennsylvania's Public Cyber Charter Schools are required to:

- ✓ Utilize technology to provide a significant portion of the curriculum and instruction through the internet or other electronics means.
- ✓ Enroll all school-age children from across Pennsylvania and meet their needs regardless of where the child resides.
- ✓ Provide both regular and special education services including supports to parents and families as necessary to help each child achieve their academic goals.
- ✓ Comply with all state testing mandates and ensure equal access to safe, physical environments for students to attend and complete PSSA and Keystone exams.
- ✓ Comply with all local, state, and federal financial accounting, reporting, and auditing requirements.

Cost Considerations of High Quality Public Cyber Charter Schools

- Building and facility leasing for administrative offices, including registrars, pupil health, special education, enrollment services, technology support, and teacher office space.
- Technology equipment for students, staff and administration including distribution and reclamation.
- Shipping curriculum and educational support materials to and from students.
- Research, development and implementation of innovative teaching design including all materials and resources.
- 24/7 Technical Support statewide.
- Learning Management and Student Information Systems.
- Enrollment Services statewide.
- Internet reimbursement allocation for in home services.
- Travel expenses for teachers and staff to fulfill State testing mandates, field trips, graduation, and other student and family support activities.
- Facility rental to comply with all State testing mandates.
- Family Supports and Services statewide.
- Contracting with various related services providers to meet individual student goals.
- Individual in home therapies including all travel related expenses.
- Coordination with various social services agencies statewide to provide in home support for students and families.
- Travel expenses required to maintain and enforce daily attendance mandates including truancy related court appearances.



Pennsylvania's Public Cyber Charter Schools

MYTHS - versus - FACTS

Pennsylvania's 15 Public Cyber Charter Schools are the Choice for well informed parents throughout the Commonwealth. During the 2017-2018 School Year, more than 37,000 students attended a public cyber charter school to help achieve their academic goals.¹

MYTH Public school money is being poured into Public Cyber Charter Schools

- ◆ School Districts (SDs) determine how much it costs to educate regular and special education students within their respective region.
- ◆ On average, School Districts reimburse cyber charter schools just 75% of what the SD has determined it costs to educate a child. SDs keep the remaining 25% within their brick and mortar buildings. The School District of Philadelphia is reimbursing charter schools on average 41% less per public school student.²
- ◆ School Districts are also placing funds in special accounts to avoid reimbursements to public school students who attend charter schools.³
- ◆ "Rising costs" are a direct result of parents choosing cyber charter schools over the traditional school district options to help meet their student's educational needs.

FACTS

MYTH Public Cyber Charter Schools lack oversight

- ◆ The Pennsylvania Department of Education has direct oversight of all 15 public cyber charter schools.
- ◆ All 15 public cyber charter schools are required to submit more reports than traditional public schools. These reports go to the PA Department of Education (PDE), the Federal Department of Education, the PA Health Department and other agencies; over 300 annually!
- ◆ Certified Independent Public Accounting Firms review and report on all cyber charter school financial information annually. Each school's budgets are reported on the PDE website.
- ◆ Cyber charter schools host public board of trustee meetings and publish both the agendas and minutes online.
- ◆ Cyber charter schools must submit annual charter reports demonstrating results consistent with their operating charters.
- ◆ Cyber charter schools are required to renew their operating charters every 3-5 years. Their operating charters can be revoked by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- ◆ Cyber charter schools are ultimately accountable to the parents and students who continue to choose the cyber model of education to help their students achieve their goals.

FACTS

SOURCES:

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Enrollment Reports and Projections. Public School Enrollments 2018-2019. [https://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Enrollment Reports and Projections.aspx](https://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Enrollment%20Reports%20and%20Projections.aspx)
2. Charter School Funding. Pennsylvania Department of Education. <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Charter%20Schools/Pages/Charter-School-Funding.aspx>
3. Ray, S. P. (2019, April 16). School board reviews early budget. http://www.titusvilleherald.com/news/article_4b937e60-6001-11e9-a8f5-ff24fd1d6e80.html

Pennsylvania's Public Cyber Charter Schools

MYTHS - versus - FACTS



MYTH Public Cyber Charter Schools have questionable academic performance

- ◆ Cyber charter school students are required to take the same state mandated tests as all public school students.
- ◆ Many of Pennsylvania's public school students enroll in cyber charter schools with academic deficits; often 2 or more years behind their classmates.
- ◆ Many public school students enroll in cyber charter schools after the school year has begun and after their individual needs were not met in their former schools.

- FACTS**
- ◆ Pennsylvania's School Performance Profile (SPP) data is based on a student's performance on a single, end of year test resulting in low scores for students who are already academically behind.
 - ◆ Pennsylvania's new Future Ready Index takes into account a student's previous academic performance and includes a student's year over year growth, an indication of a student's success within a particular school.
 - ◆ Students who remain in a cyber charter school for 3 or more years show consistent academic growth that surpasses that of the traditional brick and mortar school district.

MYTH Public Cyber Charter Schools "over identify" special education students

- ◆ Public Cyber Charter Schools are required to comply with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The "Child Find" portion of IDEA identifies Special Education Students is specific and required by all schools.
- ◆ Child Find requires all public, cyber charter schools to locate, identify, evaluate, and support any student who may need special education supports to meet their individual academic goals.
- ◆ Cyber charter schools are required to ensure that all students identified as needing special education services are provided with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) which supports their individual needs and ensures they are able to meet their individual goals.

FACTS

MYTH School Districts increase property taxes to offset the high cost of Public Cyber Charter Schools

- ◆ School Districts are able to increase property taxes based on their approved annual budgets. Cyber Charter Schools have no taxing authority.
- ◆ In the 2017-18 school year, Pennsylvania's 500 school districts grew their reserve fund balances by \$64 million to a total of \$4.6 billion.¹
- ◆ During the 2017-2018 school year, tuition reimbursements to cyber charter schools was less than \$520 million.²
- ◆ On average, during the 2017-2018 school year, School Districts spent less than 2% of their annual budget on tuition reimbursements to cyber charter schools for educating public school students compared to over 6.5% SDs spent on debt.³
- ◆ During the 2017-2018 school year, 221 of Pennsylvania's 500 School Districts had General Fund Balances exceeding 20% of Total Spending.⁴

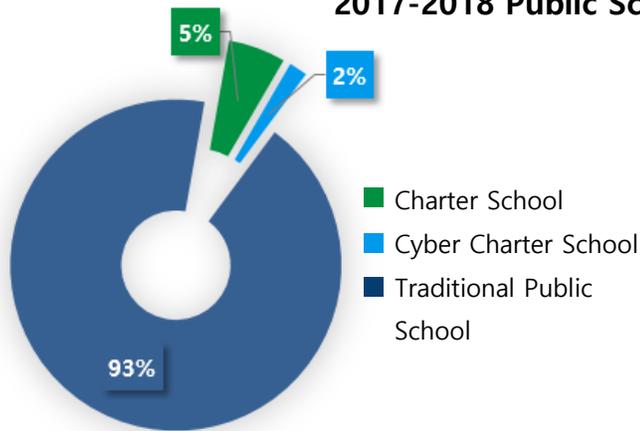
FACTS

SOURCES:

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Detailed Annual Financial Reports. General Fund Balance 1996-97 to 2017-18. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/School%20Finances/Office%20of%20Comptroller%20Operations/Pages/Annual-Financial-Report---School-District.aspx>
2. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Tuition Schedule: 2008-09 to 2017-18. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/School%20Finances/Finances/AFR%20Data%20Summary/Pages/AFR-Data-Detailed-.aspx#.VZwC6mXD-Uk>
3. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Expenditure Detail - SDs: 2008-09 to 2017-18. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/School%20Finances/Finances/AFR%20Data%20Summary/Pages/AFR-Data-Detailed-.aspx#.VZwC6mXD-Uk>
4. Commonwealth Foundation. (n.d.). Is Your School District Hoarding Cash? <https://www.commonwealthfoundation.org/issues/detail/is-your-school-district-hoarding-cash>

Pennsylvania's Public Charter Schools Welcome Accountability!

2017-2018 Public School Student Enrollment



5.6% Public Brick and Mortar Charter School Students
1.8% Public Cyber Charter School Students
92.6% Traditional Public School Students

If Accountability makes sense for 7% of Pennsylvania's Public School Students, than the other **93% of Public School Students Deserve the Same Level of Accountability!**

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Department of Education. Financial Data Elements. 2017-2018 Average Daily Membership.

Economically Disadvantaged Public School Students

33.0%

% Economically Disadvantaged in average Public School District Student Population

49.7%

% Economically Disadvantaged in Public Cyber Charter School Student Population

66.6%

% Economically Disadvantaged in Public Brick and Mortar Charter School Student Population

Any Legislation that cuts Charter School Funding will impact impoverished children and racial minorities more than any other public school student group.

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Department of Education. Future Ready Index. Data Files. School Fast Facts.

Public Charter School Students Already Receive LESS

\$17,531

Average Traditional Public School per-pupil revenue

\$14,878

Average Public Charter School per-pupil revenue

\$2,653

LESS per-pupil revenue received by Public Charter Schools than Traditional Public Schools

Charter Schools currently receive LESS, not the same and certainly not more, per-pupil funding than district-operated schools.

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Department of Education. AFR Data Files. Detailed AFR Data. Revenues; 2017-2018.

12.4% → DOUBLE

Amount of Total Expenditures Traditional School Districts spend on PSERS and Retirement Spending

The amount of what Traditional Schools Spend **to Educate 140,000 Public School Students who Attend Public Charter Schools**

6.2% → MORE THAN

Amount of Total Expenditures Traditional School Districts spend on Debt Services

The amount that Traditional Schools Spend **to Educate 140,000 Public School Students who attend Public Charter Schools**

SOURCE: Pennsylvania Department of Education. AFR Data Files. Detailed AFR Data. Expenditure Detail—SD; 2017-2018.

THE COST OF ACCOUNTING CODES

The Cost to Public School Students

7 vs 24

The School Code allows School Districts to deduct seven (7) expenses when determining charter school tuition reimbursement rates. However, PDE's FY20 template for calculating charter school tuition reimbursement rates **requires twenty-four (24) deductions.**

One of the seven deductions in The School Code is "other financing uses". "Other financing uses" in PDE's chart of accounts includes "suspense account (5800) and budgetary reserve (5900). These accounts are a "loophole" used by districts to remove eligible expenses away from charter schools.

Approximately \$150 Million was budgeted in FY19 to account code 5900 alone.

The Cost to Public School Students of Hidden Funds

\$731 Million

Charter Schools are funded based on School Districts' General Fund Budgeted expenses. School Districts are budgeting allowable expenses to other funds outside of the General Fund. For the 2018 fiscal year, **School Districts budgeted approximately \$731 million to other funds in eligible expense categories (1000 and 2000) removing the expenses from the charter school per-pupil amounts.**

11 vs 12

The School Code mandates that "payments shall be made to the charter school in twelve (12) equal monthly payments." **The schedule released by PDE for FY19 and FY20 allows for only eleven (11) payments.** The twelfth payment for a fiscal year is received on the last Thursday in August of the subsequent school year, two months after the fiscal year ends.

The Cost to Public School Students and to the Pennsylvania Department of Education

57

Number of School Districts in FY '19 that **did not complete PDE's Form 363** used to calculate Charter School Tuition Reimbursement Rates.

151

Number of School Districts that **"Fail" to make monthly payments** directly to Public Charter Schools resulting in additional administrative burdens for both PDE and Charter Schools.

The Cost to Public School Students with Special Education Needs

Governor Wolf referred to a 2016 analysis that paid charter schools \$100 million more for special education than they spent.

The analysis is FALSE and misleading.

The analysis used by Governor Wolf utilized total revenues which includes a regular education allotment and only uses the special education expense "1200 code" in PDE's chart of accounts.

There are **at least 15 accounts** outside of the "1200" category where special education costs are recorded.