

Public Cyber Charter School Association Testimony to the Senate Education Committee
May 11, 2020

The Public Cyber Charter School Association (PCCSA) is grateful for the opportunity to provide written testimony for today's hearing. Thank you to the members of the Senate Education Committee for the work you are doing to ensure all children across the Commonwealth have access to the necessary tools to succeed in this most unusual of circumstances.

The PCCSA and our member schools are proud of the work we have been doing to continue instructing our students without missing a beat. While traditional district schools are struggling to get acquainted with educating students online (understandably so) we have been able to continue doing what we do best, virtually educating students just like we have for the past 20 years.

Senate Bill 751, which was signed by the governor and is now law, states that charter schools "shall receive tuition payments based upon the enrollment as of March 13, 2020." This means that the money cyber charter schools are entitled to receive for students enrolled after March 13 will not be granted for the remainder of the year. Despite this decision, cyber charter schools throughout Pennsylvania did exactly as they were instructed and almost seamlessly rolled out continuity-of-education plans that have kept learning going.

Not once have they wavered from their commitment to educate students and help build promising futures—nor will they, despite the financial ramifications that accompany not being paid for new enrollments. Whether it's for one week, one month, one year or longer, we all want the same thing: for every student to have the opportunities they deserve.

Not only did the cyber charter schools seamlessly roll out their continuity of education plans, but while many PA families struggle, the cyber charters have also met the needs of students with special needs. Pennsylvania's cyber charter schools pride themselves on providing services based on individualized needs of students, and that couldn't be truer than for those with Individualized Learning Plan's (IEP). The established virtual learning model encourages, and many times demands communication between families and school administrators, so when COVID-19 hit, working to switch services from in-person to virtual was almost completely seamless. In fact, services continued at over a 95% rate across the schools.

Cyber charter schools find themselves in an ongoing struggle with school districts and the Department of Education to obtain the funding that is legally and rightfully theirs, and that is critical to their ability to function at the highest levels and provide the best-quality service to families. Yet, educating their student bodies will always take precedence.

This is a very challenging time. We understand the struggle brick-and-mortar administrators are facing, and that's why we will continue to share our knowledge. The Public Cyber Charter School Association could not be prouder of the educational product that its cyber charter school members put out. Virtual learning is here to stay, and at the end of the day, it is our duty

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to provide the best educational experience possible to the students of Pennsylvania, and that's exactly what we will continue to do.