

Beth Ann Hancock
9057 Florin Way,
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Bethannhancock@gmail.com

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HB 566 : SUPPORT

I am writing in support of HB 566 as a parent of a child with anxiety and sensory issues. In 2014 my son was disenrolled from public school due to his deteriorating mental health in the classroom environment and homeschooled for the next several years. This year he returned to public school as a 9th grade student and has excelled in the virtual environment. The difference in his ability to attend to learning from home rather than a classroom is remarkable. At home he has access to his emotional support animal and can wear clothing that is comfortable and does not distract him from attending to the lectures and participating in class discussions.

Many states have offered a virtual learning option for their students for several years, and families are thankful for the choice. As one of the more progressive states, Maryland should not only focus on the kids who are not doing well with virtual learning, but also recognize that there are many like my son who thrive in this environment. My son is worried that he will be forced to return to the classroom in the Fall and has already begged to return to homeschooling if he has no option to continue virtual learning. He would be much better served participating with his peers in public school using a virtual format than learning independently or in a small homeschooled peer group.

In addition to offering a different platform for learning, opening up this option for families who *choose* it would also greatly help relieve the overcrowding in schools.

Please make a favorable recommendation for this bill so virtual learning can be a choice for students like my son who may not be able to access public education successfully without it.

Respectfully,

Beth Ann Hancock