



Testimony offered on behalf of:
PEARSON VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

**IN SUPPORT, WITH AMENDMENTS TO:
SB0610 – Primary and Secondary Education – Virtual Education**

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

Hearing: 3/29/2023 at 1:00 PM

Good afternoon, Madam Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to provide testimony related to SB0610.

My name is Jennifer Clarke, and I am a State Policy Support Specialist for Pearson Virtual Schools (PVS), working with States in the northeast, many of which have established full-time statewide virtual schools. We support the establishment of a fully online opportunity for Maryland's students. PVS has more than 20 years of experience serving students in grades K-12 in an online setting. We currently support 46 fully online schools in 31 states. In fact, Pearson's online curriculum is used in many traditional and charter schools in Maryland right now.

SB0610 establishes requirements related to virtual education for public schools, including requirements for:

- virtual schools,
- teacher preparation programs, and
- expanding computer and Internet security infrastructure for virtual education.

The bill also authorizes virtual education days for severe weather conditions under specified circumstances. No virtual schools for the elementary band may be approved for operation before December 1, 2024. A virtual school may not include classes for prekindergarten or kindergarten students. The bill includes various reporting requirements for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). If enacted, the bill takes effect July 1, 2023.

Online educational opportunities are not for every student, but for some students they provide a much-needed alternative. Having worked in online education for more than 15 years, I have personally met students who were struggling academically or were being bullied in their traditional school environment. I have worked with students who were medically fragile, were pregnant or were a necessary income provider in their household. I've worked with other students who were high-achievers and looking for any opportunity available to them to take AP courses, or travel with a highly competitive sports program.

3/27/2023

SB0610

SB0610 will bring virtual education opportunities to Maryland's students. But there are some provisions within this bill that we feel require some amendments and clarification. Most promising is the legislature's commitment to opening this dialogue and directing the Department of Education to work with stakeholders on the intricacies of this opportunity. Pearson Virtual Schools is available to bring our more than 20 years of experience in 31 other states to that conversation.

Our headquarters are in Maryland. We want to serve the students of our home state and look forward to working with you to adopt legislation that will afford us that opportunity.

PEARSON VIRTUAL SCHOOLS thanks the sponsors and the House Ways and Means Committee for all the effort you have expended in working through virtual learning legislation in the past and respectfully asks for your **FAVORABLE SUPPORT ON SB0610, AS AMENDED IN THE SENATE.**

Should the Committee require any additional information, please contact me or Dennis F. Rasmussen, df@rasmussengrp.net or 410-821-4445.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Clarke

Jennifer Clarke, M.Ed.
Specialist, Partnerships & Policy
PEARSON VIRTUAL SCHOOLE
Jennifer.Clarke@pearson.com – 717-877-7703 (Cell)