

Subject: Favorable HB583
To: House Ways and Means Committee
From: Chani Dima
9433 Carriage Hill Street,
Frederick, Maryland 21704
Chani_D@outlook.com
240-994-5738

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

As a neurodivergent student with a 504 plan, I struggled to focus in the brick and mortar classroom. During middle school, I was harrassed and stalked by an older boy while my school did nothing but excuse his behavior. I was forced to listen to 911 calls of the Columbine shooting as part of the school shooting safety programs. Everyday I went to school terrified that it would be my last, wondering if I'd ever make it to graduation or if I would die a victim, trapped inside my school. In every room, I would always look for windows to jump out of in case of the worst. I was constantly in fear and I couldn't focus in the chaotic environment of the everyday classroom. Throughout middle school, I was a B, C, and even D student. However, this changed when virtual learning started. For some, online school was a struggle, but for me, I blossomed.

It was an immediate improvement in my grades. I went from barely passing my classes to becoming a straight-A student, and in some cases, at the top of my classes. The Remote Virtual Program (RVP) taught me independence, responsibility, and self-importance, something I never would have learned in a traditional classroom. In the virtual environment I was able to build strong relationships with my teachers who mentored me into who I am today. In RVP I discovered my fascination for science, mathematics, and literature. The RVP prepared me for success which has essentially allowed me to skip two grades in highschool and attend the Early College Program at my local community college. I've just finished my 3rd semester of college as a biology major with straight A's in all of my courses. I'm currently working toward my goal of becoming a medical doctor, a dream I never would have discovered without virtual school.

I'm not the only student who's blossomed in the Remote Virtual Program. My younger sister is now attending and loves it. She used to have an IEP and struggled in the brick-and-mortar classroom. Now she's an honor-roll student who loves school. She's made amazing friends through the RVP and looks forward to her classes. This is a blessing to special needs students like myself and is a necessity. It provides us with a path to education and allows us to love learning. Maryland policies should protect children like me. I urge you to support HB 583.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony,

Chani Dima