



Presented by: Jane Wittmeyer & Murphy Olmstead

1. What are you now doing differently from last year that enhances student growth & achievement?

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for having me today, my name is Murphy Olmstead I am a newly registered lobbyist with the Coalition of Idaho Charter School Families. I may be new but the Coalition has been around for a long time and has had a long track record of success.

For today, I am going to briefly testify (for my first time) on behalf of our Coalition President, Tom LeClaire. Tom was unable to make it and regrets that he cannot be here today. So again, we really appreciate the opportunity to present and we hope you find this informative and useful.

We as a coalition consist of parents, grandparents, students and teachers who support the expansion of school choice in Idaho, the provision of equal funding, and that the funding "follows the child" to the school of their choice. We are here to represent the families that have chosen the right education model that is the most suitable for their child.

In response to the committee's first question as to what we are doing now that is different from last year that enhances student growth and achievement.

We have in the past, and will continue to ask for equal funding for charter schools as well as for virtual schools.

We know that some brick-and-mortar schools drop lower-scoring students after state "final funding" allocations are made. Many of these students that are dropped are then encouraged to go to virtual schools. The virtual charter schools that take on these at-risk students work very hard to get the students back on track to graduate. There are times when the student is too far behind in credits and feels all is lost so they dropout. With that being the case, the school that had taken on the at-risk student is then penalized in their graduation rates. We as a coalition feel this may be an unfair judgement of the charter school. So to answer the first question, we are going to advocate for a student-centered system that meets state and federal accountability measures and also presents a well-rounded picture of school performance.



2. Name 2 things that you would like to do, that you are not currently doing, that will enhance student growth and achievement?

In response to the second question, we as a coalition will continue our advocacy for school choice, innovation in the classroom and adequate funding for virtual students. Our ultimate goal is to help parents find the right education model that fits the student and makes them successful. We believe that parents should have the ultimate decision making in choosing where their student goes to school.

There has been a dual-track of measurement from the state and the Charter Commission on the virtual schools that requires them to do more to keep their school open. This regulation and reporting has been a burden for many virtual schools. With that being said, one thing that we are going to improve on as a coalition is to advocate more to make sure that these schools stay open as they are the only option some of these students have left.

The last thing that the coalition would like to do this year to enhance school growth and achievement is to travel across state and talk with families in rural communities. We feel that in order to fully represent the charter school families of Idaho, we need to hear from everyone. This will be done by holding state-wide events where we can converse with families and see what is going well for them or see what issues they feel need changed.

With that, I wanted to thank you again Mr. Chairman and committee for your time and attention. We look forward to working with all of you this legislative session to continue helping Idaho education.

I will leave it open for any questions and I will be sure to answer them the best I can.

