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Murphy:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for having me today, my name is Murphy Olmstead and I manage the Coalition of Idaho Charter School Families. We are a non-profit organization that represents parents, grandparents, students and teachers who support the expansion of school choice in Idaho. I wanted to first ask the parents that took time out of their busy schedules to join us here today to stand. We have the Marjie and Steven Magee family and Melanie Fitzgerald. Thank you all for joining us.

We are here today to speak briefly on the positives of school choice and virtual schooling. With the funding formula change on the table this legislative session, I wanted to speak in support of the proposed funding formula. Our coalition represents many people in the charter school spectrum that are asking for fair funding as we represent many mobile and at-risk students. To change things up a little bit this year, I have asked Melanie Fitzgerald (one of our Coalition parents) to share her story and why she chose Idaho Virtual Academy. I will have her come up and share her story with you all today..

Melanie:

Thank you for having me today Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Melanie Fitzgerald and my daughter, Matigan, attends an online virtual school here in Idaho. I wanted to talk briefly on how and why we chose an online virtual charter school. Previously, I was a home school teacher for my children. We did home schooling for (# of years) and began to explore other options. We had found out about Idaho Virtual Academy and learned about its flexibility and how it caters for each individual student.

To give a little background about Matigan, she is very active in 4H and is the 4H Rifle State Champion for her age group. She is now training to qualify for the Junior Olympics qualifier this summer in Nebraska. On top of all that, Matigan also does Irish Dancing. This also requires a lot of travel. We spend a lot of time out of state in order for our daughter to pursue her dreams. We wouldn't have been able to ever do this if we didn't have the balanced and flexible curriculum of Idaho Virtual Academy. Being able to do school work while we are on the road has allowed for Matigan to achieve great things.

The flexibility of this curriculum has allowed her to excel inside and outside of the classroom. Recently, Matigan achieved a 4.17 GPA and became a member of the National Society of High School Scholars. She has recently scored in the 91st percentile in both the PSAT and SAT exams. She will graduate this spring at the age of 16. She plans on attending Boise State University and to earn degrees in both Elementary and Secondary education and eventually a Masters in Literacy. She hopes to eventually teach in the Idaho school system and also become an agriculture advisor.

I am in support of the recent public-school funding formula change. We hope that you all consider the stories like mine when it comes down to properly funding virtual groups. Thank you committee and Mr. Chairman for allowing me to share my story with you today. I will now leave it open to any questions you may have.

