



# Cascade Commentary

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## QuickPoint! – Online charter school students were learning at home just fine, so why have their schools been taken away from them?

By Kathryn Hickok

If Oregon charter school students can stay at home and stay in school at the same time, shouldn't they be able to?

Governor Kate Brown's [Executive Order 20-08, which closed all Oregon public schools](#) due to COVID-19, [has been interpreted to also close Oregon's online charter schools](#). This means students who were enrolled as online charter students before COVID-19 have had their online schools closed, even though these students already learn at home and can safely comply with [Oregon's social distancing and stay-at-home norms](#). Like other public schools, online charter schools are [permitted to offer "supplemental" educational materials, but not their full curriculum](#), according to *Willamette Week*.

Apparently, this decision isn't about students; it's about school funding. A [memo from the Oregon Department of Education suggests](#) that because online charter schools already have a curriculum for students to learn remotely, more parents may want to enroll their students in those programs now. And that would "impact school funding for districts across Oregon."

The ODE's logic in closing online charters seems to be that because all students can't enroll in online charters, then no students should. So, thousands of kids who were learning online just fine three weeks ago have lost access to their programs.

Online charter school students should not be at a disadvantage compared with other children who are continuing to learn at home—those who are enrolled in private schools and home schools. The Oregon Department of Education should reverse its guidance and allow students who were already enrolled in virtual charter schools to stay in school.

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*Kathryn Hickok is Executive Vice President at [Cascade Policy Institute](#), Oregon's free market public policy research organization. She is also Director of Cascade's [Children's Scholarship Fund-Oregon](#) program, which has provided private scholarships to lower-income Oregon children to help them attend tuition-based elementary schools since 1999.*

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