

Dear Chair Richardson and Committee Members,

I would like to speak out on how distance-learning has affected our family and my son. I am single mother to a severely autistic child who has co-morbid diagnoses that have not been addressed just yet.

My son is probably the most complex autistic child in Hennepin County. The past year has been hell. We started out with two days a week in person at school and ended up with one day a week in person at school. I had to advocate for two more days a week before the school opened up again. I did have an attorney who was working on getting us more than one day a week.

My son could not do distance-learning. 85% of the time he could not comply. He would end up screaming all over the floor and I would have to disconnect. Thank God I work for my son, otherwise I would've lost my job. I don't know how anybody else has done it. I am a paid parent so I am a PCA for my son. I have gotten no respite and my PTSD has been through the roof. We have been to the hospital at least five times this year with one ending up being a six week inpatient psych admit. Other times we ended up in the ER for weeks at a time with no beds available.

It is a vicious cycle in Minnesota and there's no solution for children like my son. They just do not get help. The families of children like this end up abused or there is severe psychological illness and sometimes it ends up with suicide with some families.

So let's not talk about how COVID-19 has killed people but let's talk about how the psychological illness has killed people and left people with severe PTSD and trauma. Let's talk about a child is having surgery tomorrow because he broke his front tooth off slamming it in the bathroom and how it took two months to get the scheduled when he's in pain. Due to COVID-19 guidelines nothing is easy. It could've been a lot easier if we would've kept our kids in school and we need to make up for that time lost now.

Thanks for listening and the teachers in my sons school has been nothing but helpful. It's definitely not their fault but we need to make up for what was lost. Please support HF 965.

God bless,

Nadine and son Matthew Monge