



# TESTIMONY

January 25, 2022

## SENATE BILL 648: MODIFIES PROVISIONS RELATED TO THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

*By Susan Pendergrass*

Testimony before the Missouri Senate Education Committee

### **TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Susan Pendergrass, Ph.D., and I am Director of Research and Education Policy for the Show-Me Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, Missouri-based think tank that advances sensible, well-researched, free-market solutions to state and local policy issues. The ideas presented here are my own and are offered in consideration of proposals that will affect charter schools in Missouri.

Since the historic shutdown of every public school in Missouri in April 2019, much has been learned about the ability of school districts to provide high-quality remote learning. Some school districts had mechanisms and technology in place to transition to virtual learning, and others did not. For students in districts that struggled to implement virtual learning, an alternative was, fortunately, available.

This alternative is the Missouri Course Access Program, or MOCAP, which became accessible to all Missouri public school students at no charge beginning in fall 2018.

However, the legislation that made MOCAP access available to Missouri families has several shortcomings. The first is that students must receive permission to attend MOCAP from their local superintendent. In far too many cases, districts have refused and students have had to sue in order to enroll in MOCAP. Second, funding for MOCAP students flows from the state, through the student's local district (or charter school), and out to MOCAP. This creates a slight financial disincentive to allow students to enroll. Finally, the state assessment scores of MOCAP students are incorporated into their local district's (or charter school's) test scores, which are used for accountability purposes and, in the case of charter schools, count toward charter renewal. This creates a strong incentive to refuse

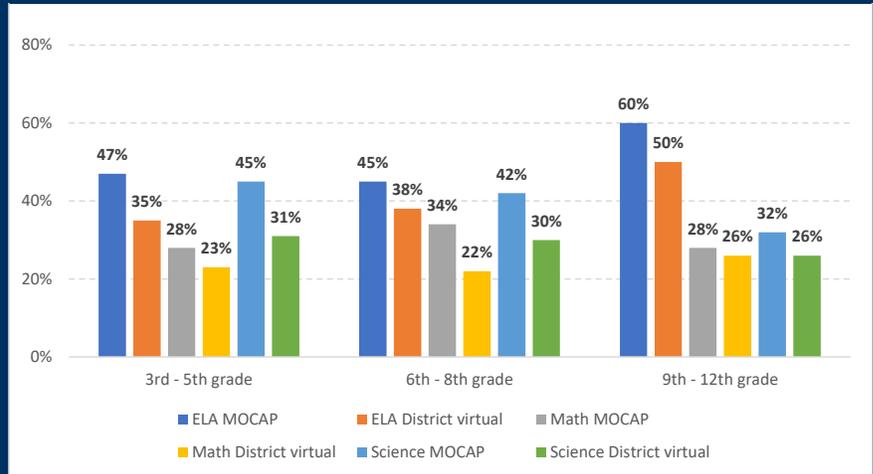
ADVANCING LIBERTY WITH RESPONSIBILITY  
BY PROMOTING MARKET SOLUTIONS  
FOR MISSOURI PUBLIC POLICY

lower-performing students requests to become MOCAP students. Districts are likely to prefer to be able to positively impact the performance of these students. Regardless, a student's test scores should be attributable to their education provider, not a district which they do not attend.

SB 648 would amend two of these shortcomings: superintendent permission and test result attribution. Funding for MOCAP students would continue to flow through their local district.

Improving the ease of enrollment into MOCAP is critical. Results presented at the January 2022 state Board of Education meeting demonstrated that virtual MOCAP students fared dramatically better than virtual district students during the previous school year (2020–21). Although the MOCAP scores represent fewer students than the district virtual scores, there seems to have been a benefit from attending established MOCAP programs rather than those created by local districts.

## 2020–21 Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Scores Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Higher



### CONCLUSION

One clear conclusion that can be made post-pandemic is that students need options for their education. While most students have returned to in-person learning, access to high-quality virtual learning continues to be a necessity. SB 648 would remove some of the roadblocks to MOCAP that should never have been placed there.



5297 Washington Place | Saint Louis, MO 63108 | 314-454-0647  
 1520 Clay Street, Suite B-6 | North Kansas City, MO 64116—816-561-1777

Visit Us:  
[showmeinstitute.org](http://showmeinstitute.org)

Find Us on Facebook:  
 Show-Me Institute

Follow Us on Twitter:  
 @showme

Watch Us on YouTube:  
 Show-Me Institute