

# Schooling

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Greater Albany Public School District 8J

- Junction City School District
- Lincoln County Public Schools
- North Santiam School Districts
- Pendleton School District
- Redmond School District

Because the cap is set in statute — ORS 338.125(4) — it requires legislative action to be changed.

A bill that would raise the cap was presented to state lawmakers in June. However, the legislature did not include it on the list of bills for the special session.

The Oregon Virtual Public Schools Alliance supports a permanent cap increase and would likely support legislative action in the future, though none is planned at this time. The group also has a petition on its website, urging Oregon lawmakers to increase the cap.

Powell acknowledged virtual schools don't work for everyone, adding that it often depends on the needs and schedules of each family. Both her children have spent years enrolled in virtual charter schools, as well as years at brick and mortars.

Powell also acknowledged the option as a form of school choice, arguing it's



**Suleika McCaughey practices letters with her son Sami Adham, 8, at their Salem home in April.**

one Oregon families should have.

"It's outrageous that during a time of unprecedented school closures and the reemergence of COVID-19," she said, "the state Legislature would make it harder — not easier — for parents to protect the health and safety of their families, while meeting the educational needs of their children."

For more information, go to [www.oregonlaws.org/ors/338.125](http://www.oregonlaws.org/ors/338.125) or [www.oregonvirtualschools.org](http://www.oregonvirtualschools.org).

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# Shorthanded

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been really, really shorthanded. We're running 60%."

Freres Lumber was approved for a \$5 million PPP loan on April 27, and Freres said the company will spend all of that on payroll.

Despite an unemployment rate in Oregon of 11.2% in June, the company has been searching for employees since the slowdown.

The nearly 100-year-old wood products producer was forced to shut down for the first week in May as orders slowed along with the state's shut down, and it ran out of room to store the plywood and other products it produces.

But it kept its employees on the payroll.

During that week the company was closed, three workers contracted COVID-19.

While some manufacturing businesses have struggled with outbreaks of employees contracting COVID-19, Freres said the three employees who contracted the coronavirus quarantined with pay.

"They caught that when they weren't here," Freres said. "They wouldn't have caught it if we wouldn't have had to shut down for a week."

Freres Lumber has provided PPE and cleaning supplies, mandated social distancing by marking separation, discouraged use of lunchrooms, installed plexiglass barriers, closed offices to the public and increased third-party cleaning of public areas.

Freres Lumber vice president of Operations Kyle Freres said the company has paid for employees to stay home while not feeling well, encouraged them to maintain social distance while away from work and been upfront about their cases and informed co-workers of possible exposures.

"No one wants to get sick and no one wants to transmit sickness to others," Kyle Freres said. "We all realize that COVID transmissions in the workplace can affect the health of friends, family, and co-workers."

"We are an essential industry that worked through the pandemic, and we wanted to be as safe as possible while sustaining the livelihood of our employees and our business."

Though Freres Lumber is located at its multiple facilities in Lyons, it draws most of its employees from the Highway 22 corridor cities of Salem, Keizer, Turner, Aumsville, Stayton, Mill City and Detroit, many of which have been harder hit than the Linn County city of 1,200.

Despite employees coming from areas hard hit by the coronavirus, it still has only had three employees contract the virus.



**Freres Lumber spent about \$10,000 to install dividers to keep workers safe from spreading COVID-19.**

SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Rob Freres said the company is hiring for skilled positions including structural engineers, CNC operators, electricians and truck drivers as well as unskilled workers.

"We'll help with schooling and it

doesn't have to be directly work-related at the present time," Rob Freres said.

To apply, go to <https://frereslumber.com/careers/current-job-openings/>. Positions pay from \$13.85 to \$25 an hour.

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# Fee

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sites from March to June brought a major hit in revenue for state parks that, combined with the decline in Oregon Lottery dollars that also supports parks, has meant a \$22 million shortfall for OPRD.

The agency responded with cuts, layoffs and a hiring freeze that means only about half the normal amount of rangers are patrolling state parks in a year when more people than ever are flooding parks and public lands.

"There's no modern equivalent for attempting to serve as many people as we expect with as few a people as we'll have," OPRD spokesman Chris Havel previously told the Statesman Journal. "We're basically operating with a skeleton crew."

Havel stressed that the new surcharge is temporary and primarily aimed at encouraging people to keep recreation local. He noted that New Mexico has closed all its state parks to out of state visitors, but Oregon isn't going that far.

"We're adding this as one more way for people to think about whether this is the right time for a long-distance trip," OPRD spokesman Chris Havel said. "If people from out of state consider that, and still want to come, it'll cost a little extra and they'll be supporting our state parks system."

If Oregon wanted to continue the added fee into the future, that would require a more complex process, Havel said.

"For now, the focus is only on this year," Havel said. The surcharge is similar to the extra fees most state add to fishing licenses purchased by out of state residents.