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HB 11  
The Back Pack Bill  
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Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and Honorable Members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 11, also known as the Backpack Bill.

My name is Tera Myers, and I live in Mansfield, Ohio. I support the Backpack Bill today because every child in Ohio matters, and every parent, regardless of geographical location, deserves the choice of where their child is educated.

I know the difficulties of navigating the current education system and being left with a “one size fits all system” of education. Fortunately for my children and me, our legislature saw the need to offer choice when our district school was deemed failing and again when we worked hard to provide for students like my son who have exceptional learning needs with the passage of the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship. Today I still ask, “why not every parent of every student?” HB 11 would solve this problem.

Many people ask why I still urge education freedom for all students long after my children have gone on to graduate not only k-12 but also college. My response is easy, “no family should ever have to settle for a program that is not working for their children, regardless of the reasons.” I remember all too well how hard we tried to make our public program work for all of our children. I was told, “go home and take the

six-and-a-half-hour break” and “let us do what we do.” When I asked why my son was not being taught how he would learn best, I was told, “we have up to the day he graduates to teach him how to read.” I had had enough when I was told to toughen up my daughter or have her get over it. This was unacceptable, and I never wanted another parent to feel the heartbreak I felt when I was told. “Go ahead and take your children elsewhere; you can’t do it without us; we control all the funds.” Education should never be a monopoly system; it should always be about what is best for the children.

The Ed Choice scholarship offered a solution for my daughters to be educated in an environment that was safe, academically appropriate, and morally aligned with our family’s values. All three of our children have become well-educated, productive members of society. I am confident that the choice programs they were afforded made this possible. Every parent should be able to choose the best educational setting for their children.

When the Jon Peterson Scholarship was passed, I heard many concerns about how it would wreck the public system, leaving only the least behind, and only a few private programs would be offered for students like my son. None of that was true. We still have yet to reach the scholarship cap almost twelve years after the passage. New programs are opening almost every year, and to my knowledge, we have not had a single mass exodus causing collapse at any public program in Ohio. Many families are happy with their current education options; they are going nowhere. Families that are unhappy or need something different should have the power to choose. We, as taxpayers, should be able to have the ability to prioritize how our money is spent. Choice does not take away from anyone; it empowers.

Several of our local districts have risen to the challenge and offered better programs for the students that attend them.

Education Freedom isn't about an "us against them" idea. It merely allows the citizens to make choices for the most valuable commodity in our society, the children. Children are our future, and parents are the best suited to decide where a student will best learn. When families can easily make these decisions, it creates unity, collaboration, and commitment. Sometimes parents even need to change course because circumstances have changed. There is no good reason to disallow a student to be eligible for the best education possible. Ohio has gotten it right so many times in the recent past. We have enacted robust opportunity, and this bill will close the gap for all Ohio students. I know that this committee's members and our great state's legislature want to do what is best for our children.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Backpack Bill. I urge you to vote yes on this legislation and would happily answer any questions.