

HB 96 Interested Party Testimony
Elijah Denson
Senate Education Committee
Chairman Andrew Brenner
May 14, 2025

Chairman Brenner and members of the Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Elijah Denson, I'm impacted by dyslexia, and you just heard my mom talk about why the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship is important to our family. I'd like to tell you about my experience at Marburn Academy and how it has helped me.

It's hard to put my experience at Marburn into context without hearing a little about my prior school. Before attending Marburn, my experience was less than ideal. From kindergarten to third grade, I attended my local public school. My classes were pretty big, my teachers were okay, and I believe many were trying to help me. Because of my specific challenges I felt like I was getting left behind. I remember being told, "You'll just catch up." I remember working with my mom on lots of homework, often learning more from her than my teachers. Everything just seemed harder. School was harder, so life was harder.

Lucky for me, I had my mom by my side, and Marburn Academy. Five years ago, I started attending Marburn Academy in 4th grade. There are lots of things I could share, but I want to share some of the bigger differences.

- Because of Marburn, I no longer think of my learning difference as a disability. Dyslexia slows me down, but I have advantages too. Through Marburn, I've come to realize I pick up on things much quicker than many and that has led to many of my successes.
- The teachers are amazing because they have more time to help and understand what I need. They know me so well, learning seems personalized. I've never heard them say, "You'll catch up later." Similarly, because we are all working on something at Marburn, the comradery is very high and no one is sitting in a corner, alone and defeated or getting laughed at.
- Instead of doing three hours of homework with my mom (something that wasn't always enjoyable), I've learned skills that allow me to finish my work much faster. This means I can ride my bike, mow the lawn, or just explore the world. Now, the time I spend with my mom isn't frustrating or tense, it's about having fun and being a son.
- Math is my favorite subject. I've always been stronger with numbers and I can see myself being an engineer, gunsmith, or in law enforcement someday. I see a future where I can make an impact because of my mom and Marburn.

Overall, thank you for supporting me and other students around Ohio. I'm proud to be an advocate for all of them. I just wish they could all find a mom like mine and school like Marburn.

Chairman Brenner, thank you for allowing me to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions.