

May 5, 2021

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee--thank you for this opportunity to provide interested party testimony regarding House Bill 110.

My name is Marin Santorsola and I am a Catholic school mom of five from St. Catharine School, here in Columbus.

I am testifying today to express my support and gratitude for the Jon Peterson and Autism scholarship programs.

In 2012, our son Pete was diagnosed with autism. My husband and I worried that his diagnosis would mean that the future full of possibilities we had envisioned for his schooling would instead be full of limitations, differences, and tough decisions.

We knew we wanted a Catholic education for our children. But we also knew that in order to reach his full potential, our son would need intervention services--costly services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and classroom aides.

Thanks to the Jon Peterson and Autism Scholarship programs, we've been able to apply funding toward resources and support that have been crucial to Pete's progress. His service providers and teachers have worked in collaboration, dedicated to nurturing his success while nurturing his faith formation as well.

I'm delighted to say that in a few weeks Pete will graduate from St. Catharine and move on to high school, where he is a merit scholarship recipient.. Over the past 7 years he's won the school spelling bee, played on the basketball team, and served on student council. In short, he's become the confident, supported, participatory member of the school community we'd hoped he could be. I am deeply thankful for Ohio's state educational scholarships. They have given us the ability to choose a Catholic education for all our children, without sacrificing the vital intervention services which benefit our son so greatly.

I ask that you thoughtfully consider increasing the scholarship amounts for both the Jon Peterson and Autism Scholarship programs. These amounts have not been increased in six years, but, I assure you the expenses for the types of therapies and services students with special needs benefit from HAVE. Increasing the scholarship amounts will help families choose the best educational path for their child.

Chair Brenner and members of the committee, I appreciate your time and the opportunity to provide my testimony in ardent support of the Jon Peterson and Autism Scholarship programs in HB110. I ask for your favorable support as well. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions.