

Jenna Smith

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Dear **Chair Brenner, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee:**

I want to thank Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony regarding H.B. 110.

My name is Jenna Smith, I am from London, Ohio. I am the mother of a Gabriel Smith and my son has been able to use the Autism Scholarship since he was diagnosed at age 3. I wanted to be able to testify on how life changing this scholarship has been for our child. Gabe is a special kid, who has a passion for learning and growing his skills academically and socially. However, Gabe needs the flexibility of learning in an environment that is appropriate for him, and the scholarship has provided the flexibility. Gabe was not able to adjust to our districts public school, we needed options that fit his needs. That is what we have found in the school that he currently attends, and we are able to use the scholarship to make that happen for him. He has excelled in every subject and socially because this program is designed to fit his individual needs as well as the special one on one time he desperately needed. I can't not emphasize how important it is for families to have the ability to use an alternate approach to education for these kids. This scholarship will absolutely be one of the reasons Gabe will be a contributing member of society when he is an adult. Without the funding and options, we would have been at the mercy of a one size fits all education that is not appropriate for children that need specialized learning.

I think its important to continue this scholarship and if possible, add additional funding it has been six years since the scholarship has been increased. Expansion of the program is needed so there is no family and more importantly children that are left behind. These children are bright, capable, and worth investing in. I would like to close with thanking everyone of you for your time and consideration for this scholarship as this issue grows and needs attention. I want to leave you with an image of a family that was devastated from a diagnosis of autism in there beautiful three-year-old son. We felt hopeless, lost,

and desperate, a child psychologist walked us through applying for the scholarship and giving us some direction on what Gabe needed in a school. Fast forward and through that direction and the resources we have received through the scholarship we have a thriving ten-year-old son, who is verbal, adding, subtracting, reading, and getting closer to achieving grade level schoolwork. That is what the autism scholarship has done for the Smith family! It a scholarship that brings hope and it is so important that we keep it growing and protecting these children's ability to receive an education that works for them.

Sincerely,

Jenna Smith