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Marilyn John
State Representative

Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 11, also known as The Backpack Bill.

Education is a cornerstone to success for our children and the success of our children is a cornerstone for our society. As the philosopher Plato once said, "The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life." Education is not a one size fits all concept because how direction is received is specific to an individual. I am a mother of two and I can verify what works for one child, does not work for another. Over the past few years we have seen some alarming trends in our schools, such as chronic absenteeism rates of over 50% in our state's more urban school districts, falling test scores, an unaccounted for loss of student population and questionable curriculum choices. These examples demonstrate the need for a more accountable and robust education system and that is why Representative McClain and I introduced HB 11.

The Backpack Bill is a pro-child, pro-parent, pro-family bill which empowers parents and families to choose a form of education which best fits their child. Research shows improved academic outcomes for students and improved parent satisfaction, one of the best metrics of student success. With robust school choice, free market concepts are applied to education, driving improvement not just for the students taking advantage of choice, but those students remaining in our public schools. In addition, this bill does not change the allocation of local and federal tax dollars, which makes up nearly 60% of the revenue school districts receive. This means the per-pupil funding is likely to be higher for students who remain in the public school system and do not use a Backpack Scholarship.

As I stated, education is not one size fits all and public education doesn't work for every student. A story was shared with me of a young boy enrolled in one of the highest rated public school systems in Central Ohio. At school this young man has been bullied and harassed mercilessly to the point where the parents want to transfer him to another school district. Unfortunately, their options are limited, they do not live in a school district that is eligible for EdChoice scholarships, their income level disqualifies them and open enrollment options are limited or non-existent. What are parents to do in these situations? Many stories like this will

State Representative Marilyn John
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be shared with you throughout these hearings from parents and families who just want choice in one of the most important parts of their child's life.

How do we strengthen families in Ohio? How do we set our children up for success? We shift the focus of education in Ohio back to students and House Bill 11 does just that. The Backpack Bill empowers students to receive the education that is best for them and suits their individual needs.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify today, and we are happy to answer any questions you may have.