

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 Jacqueline Deitering and I live in Fort Jennings, Ohio along with my husband of 16 years, Kevin and our 4 children; Drew (12), Audra (9), Austin (7) and Aaron (4). I am currently in my 16th year as an intervention specialist and am speaking to you today in support of the Backpack Bill both as a parent and as an educator due to the profound positive impact school choice has had in my family.

My husband, Kevin and I are typical hardworking, middle class people. Kevin has worked in carpentry for over 20 years. We both have jobs that we love, that fulfill us and make us happy. Even though we are hard-working individuals, we would not be able to send our children to the private, Catholic school they currently attend if it weren't for school choice legislation such as the Backpack Bill. This bill would make it possible for more families like ours to choose the school that is the best fit for their family.

Kevin and I are fortunate to live in an area of Ohio where there are many high performing public schools. Our children would receive an excellent education at any public school they would have otherwise attended. I have worked in public schools for the past 15 years and am proud of the work that educators in public schools do day in and day out. They are passionate and committed to providing every child with the best educational experience.

Our path to choose a private school began when our oldest son was getting ready for Kindergarten. We were both raised in Catholic families and we knew we wanted our children to grow up with Catholic values. We started discussing where we wanted him to go to school. I wanted the same public school that I had graduated from, while Kevin wanted our son to go to the private, Catholic school he had graduated from. He described his time at his private school as the best years of his life, where everyone treated each other like family and how he wanted his children to have the same experience. We had many discussions and I always relied on the fact that our children could get a Catholic education for free at my public school. The students at my alma mater participate in Religion class first thing in the morning at church, then attend the public school for the rest of the day. Why should we pay tuition for something when we could get the same thing for free? As fate would have it, I was offered a position teaching at the public elementary school in our town and the decision to have our children attend Delphos St. John's was made. Little did I know that there is so much more to a Catholic education than just morning Religion classes.

As our children grew and became school-age, I found myself looking through their Religion materials, reading and learning or re-learning things about the Catholic faith I had forgotten throughout the years. I noticed my kids talking about Jesus more at home. I was able to begin growing in my own faith through our children's Catholic education. My children have a stronger faith in their young lives than I did at their age. I believe that our children would receive an excellent, well-rounded education at any of our local public schools, but they would be missing

the major component that has been such a gift to our family, the opportunity to learn and grow with Jesus.

Giving our children a Catholic education has been the best decision we have made as a family. As a family we have grown in our faith together and that has only been possible through having school choice giving us financial support in order to do so. The Backpack Bill will enable many more families to choose schools that best fit their values.