

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 Nathan Stant and I live in Delphos, Ohio. I am expressing my support of the Backpack Bill today because my wife, Kristin and I, have been blessed with the opportunity to graduate from a Catholic School, and also to choose to currently send our children, Eli (who is here with me today) and Lydia to a Catholic School, but unfortunately some parents have not had that same opportunity in Delphos, Ohio, or in other locations throughout our state.

As the Elementary Principal at Delphos St. John's for the past 14 years, I have been blessed to have the opportunity to work in a Parochial School that has a mission to "encourage all to learn and live a Christ-centered life..." Through this experience I have been able to partner with hundreds of parents who choose to send their children to St. John's in order for their children to be raised and schooled in an environment where they can learn the Academic Standards set by the State of Ohio and adopted by the Diocese of Toledo Catholic Schools, while also learning about the message of Faith in the person of Jesus Christ and the truths we believe in the Catholic Church. Through this blessing of partnering with many parents, I have also had the unfortunate experience/challenge of having to let parents know we cannot service their child or children due to a family having a lack of finances to pay tuition or because we cannot service their child's special needs due to lack of being able to fund the services needed. Programs like the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship and the EdChoice Expansion Scholarship have helped that situation some, however it still does not adequately address as many situations as an Educational Savings Account option that HB 11 would provide to all children in Ohio.

In what we proudly call and I agree is the greatest country in the world, and the great State of Ohio, where the freedom of religion is at the foundation of our state and nation, I have to sometimes still tell a family who wants their child to have a quality Catholic Education; I'm sorry you cannot afford it or we cannot afford to service your child's needs here. We pay taxes and will continue to faithfully do so in support of public education, but let's come together as true leaders in education in Ohio and offer a true public program of education, where ALL parents have the right to choose the best education, including religious schools if they prefer, for their children!

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Backpack Bill. I urge you to vote yes on this legislation and would be happy to answer any questions.