

## HB 11-Proponent Testimony

March 10, 2023

I would like to thank Representatives Riordan and McClain for sponsoring House Bill 11, the Backpack Bill, and to all of the members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee for the consideration to include educational freedom for ALL families here in Ohio.

I am writing to you today as a wife, mother of three amazing children that attend public school, and a tax payer here in Ohio.

I take my role as a mother seriously. Ever since they were growing inside my body, I knew them. I've made it my job to nurture them, create spaces for them to learn and grow and sometimes fail and grow from that as well. I know what makes them tick, what makes them anxious, what makes them happy. I'm there for them when they are sick or having a hard day at school and I know when something is just "off". I know what types of learners they are, all three being dramatically different. We are all parents that know what's best for our children. It's time we have the right to decide where their school dollars go so that, us, as the parents, can set our children up for success on their truly unique paths as learners.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of having my children exposed to inappropriate, and often times pornographic material. I went through a month long process with our school districts book review committee where I gave a 15 minute statement as to why I felt a book called Gender Identity was inappropriate for children to read in middle school. This book covered topics such as "it's perfectly normal to believe you are born in the wrong body", medical procedures that you can undergo to change what you don't like, and that if parents aren't affirming, it conveniently included resources for groups that will affirm your child. During this month long process, this book still sat on display in the school library, for an entire month, with a sticker that said "choose me, I'm new" promoting and enticing young readers. After finally winning the battle and having the book removed, my son came home to tell me that three more books about gender identity were in its place on display. Except this time, the books were even more extreme. Discussing prostitution in a positive light, stating it's the oldest profession, it gets a bad name and it's just like any other career like being an architect or a hair dresser.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of speaking to our superintendent, our school board, principals, and librarians and getting either no response, pushed off for weeks or months, or given the excuse that LGBTQ flags, gender identity books and posters, pronoun surveys, social justice themed assignments and books, are all perfectly acceptable based on inclusion.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of finding information through public records requests that our district is hiding from parents like transgender guidelines, librarians pushing through certain agenda driven books, and hiding information from parents about their children, such as not informing parents about gender identity struggles.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of fighting. I'm tired of arguing. I'm tired of explaining why our families morals and values should be honored and respected in a school setting and not actively tried to be unravelled as soon as my child steps foot through those doors. We cannot expect our children to be the light in a place of darkness. It's not fair to expect them to go to battle every day for their families values, beliefs and morals. All we ask is for a neutral learning environment for our children so they can critically think and to receive a solid education so they can be prepared to be successful productive citizens.

Our district is rated five stars, according to Ohio State's report card. When you dig into the numbers of our 5 star rated district, you will quickly find that we are not truly showing growth and achievement like our 5 star rating would lead you to believe. Many of our schools have shown significant decline in growth in areas like American Government, Algebra and English. All the while, our Diversity department is pushing social justice themed books and gender diverse books with low lexile levels. Solid academics have also taken a back seat to Social Emotional Learning. Our children are taught at school that how you feel at this moment is "your truth". If you don't like writing papers, that's okay, you can just do a rap or a podcast. This is teaching children that you don't have to do the hard things. That there will always be an easy button. Our gifted students are not receiving the services they deserve. Of the children identified as gifted, less than 25% of them are actually receiving services. On the flip side, my son's middle school received just a two star rating that showed significant evidence that the school fell short of state expectations. And this principal received a raise and a promotion.

The majority of Ohioans do not qualify for the current Ed choice model. Families like mine that are blessed with a good job to pay our bills that allows for us to put money away for retirement and college savings, but doesn't allow for disposable income to pay tens of thousands of dollars every year to a private education. And why? Because our public schools have failed our children. I have three children and to be able to send them to a moderately priced private school, we would need to spend \$33k/year. My youngest is a first grader, so that would mean 11 more school years.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of arguing, pleading with district leadership and my words falling on deaf ears.

Expanding school choice to all tax paying Ohioans NOW would be life changing for so many children. It will create competition and raise everyone up. It's time to let the parents take charge of their child's education choices, like many other states have been doing successfully for years.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this extremely important bill. Pass the Backpack Bill so that ALL children will have access to the funding they so desperately need NOW so that these children can excel in the environment that works for them!

Christina Yeary