

March 30, 2022

The Ohio House
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215-6111

The Ohio Senate
Statehouse, Senate Building
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: 104 North Central Ohio Clergy Support of House Bill 290 entitled “The Backpack Bill”

Dear 134th Ohio General Assembly,

The Ohio public school system in our great state has gotten out of hand. With pornographic curriculum, (1) gender-neutral bathrooms, (2) and the grooming of students to become activists for radical political agendas, (3) the monopoly numerous dysfunctional public schools have in Ohio must end. Without a doubt, this is the reason why a record number of parents across the United States are engaging local school boards.

Informed parents who disagree with the radical 1619 Project, or with the divisive Critical Race Theory have been unfairly vilified. With the shameful National School Boards Association lobbying the Department of Justice to classify these parents as “domestic terrorists,” it is urgent parents be given educational options.

The Bible says in the Book of Nehemiah “Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses.”

It is our firm conviction that empowering parents to make decisions for their own children can help Ohio boost its academic scores, whether in public, private, or home school settings. The “Backpack Bill” is a school freedom model where educational funding supports students instead of systems. Moreover, as clergymen representing one hundred and four (104) congregations across North Central Ohio, we humbly implore that you support the passage of House Bill 290, nicknamed the “Backpack Bill.”

It is our understanding House Bill 290 will direct the state’s per pupil allocation to be placed into an Educational Scholarship Account for any student who opts in. Parents can use that money (\$5,500 for grades K-8 and \$7,500 for grades 9-12) for tuition at a private school or for home school. If a student chooses their local public school or community school, the funding will follow them there, just like it currently does.

Educational freedom can be the rising tide that raises all ships. Every child is unique, which is why a one-size-fits-all approach fails too many children.

Of the twenty-seven studies that have looked at the competitive effects of school choice programs, twenty-five of them found public school academic performance improved after school freedom programs were introduced to those schools. (4)

In closing, the Backpack Bill, sponsored by State Representatives Marilyn John, and Riordan McClain, will tie taxpayer dollars to students and teachers instead of buildings and bureaucracy. Consequently, parents will be able to better tailor their student’s education to his or her own specific needs. Suffice to say, the Backpack Bill is school choice, student empowerment, and parental rights all in one package.

As the Bible says in the Third Epistle of John, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." Thank you for your careful consideration. May GOD grant you wisdom for the next generation in these perilous times.

Cc: Governor Mike DeWine
Ohio State Board of Education

The following clergymen representing one hundred and four (104) congregations throughout North Central Ohio are urging the Ohio General Assembly to pass House Bill 290, the "Backpack Bill." Co-signers include:

Pastor Doug Tackett, Taylortown Community	Bishop Anthony Cooper, Shelby Life Church
Pastor Aaron Rose, Madison Fusion Church	Pastor Jerry O'Brien, Orville Harvest Fellowship
Pastor J.C. Church Victory in Truth Ministries	Pastor Dave Rentzel, Ontario Abundant Life Tabernacle
Pastor Mark Meyer, Lexington Gracepoint Church	Pastor Layton Broome, Hayesville United Methodist
Pastor John Bouquet, Savannah Bethel Baptist	Pastor Chad Hayes, Caesarea Baptist Church
Pastor Clint Zeigler, Sovereign Christ Church	Pastor Christopher Replogle, Crestline Calvary Baptist
Pastor Mark Dettmer, Pleasant Grove Community	Pastor Matthew Pond, Shelby First Freewill Baptist
Pastor Hank Webb, Belmont Community Church	Rabbi William Hallbrook, Ontario Sar Shalom Center
Pastor Ed Colegrove, Edison Enterprise Baptist	Pastor Art Kennard, Shelby Maranatha Christian Center
Pastor Bruce Philippi, Journey Life Center	Pastor Ron Smals, Woodville Grace Brethren
Pastor Christopher Thomas, Diamond Hills Baptist	Pastor Louis Blevins, Mansfield Latter Rain Church
Pastor Berry Carter, Massillon City Bible Church	Pastor Robert O'Brien, Mansfield Apostolic Faith Assembly
Pastor Steve Brennehan, Awakening Christian Ctr.	Pastor Matthew Potosky, Albion Brethren Church
Pastor Faron Cole, Eastern Road Church of GOD	Bishop Sylvester Ginn, Hesed Agape Fellowship
Pastor Eric Byrom, Mansfield Grace Fellowship	Pastor Aaron Boggs, Fredericktown Freewill Baptist
Pastor Dave Davenport, Faith Baptist Church	Pastor Taylor Howard, Mansfield Apostolic Holiness
Pastor Ron Puff, Pleasant Valley Baptist	Pastor Steve Baldrige, Rome Community Church
Pastor Robert Kurtz, Mansfield Temple Baptist	Pastor Steve Burkhalter, Mansfield Potter's House
Pastor Bill Fox, Crestline Faith Community Church	Pastor Mark Wireman, Shiloh Pentecostal Church GOD
Pastor Dan Baer, Mansfield Gospel Assembly	Pastor Rob Ratcliff, North Woodbury Freewill Baptist
Pastor George Lewis, Shelby Temple of GOD	Elder Moe Hill, Grace Evangelical Free Church
Pastor Clarence Sanderfer, New Life Baptist	Pastor James Marshall, Ganges Community Church
Pastor Joe Nichols, ARC Empowerment Center	Pastor Russell Stanford, All Believers in Christ Church
Pastor Russ Smith, Shiloh Wesley Evangelical	Pastor Brad Gentille, Shelby First Baptist Church
Pastor Kevin Evans, Ganges Liberty Baptist	Pastor Ron Kosa, Mansfield Living Word Church
Pastor Joe Smith, Ontario Westside Baptist	Pastor Brian Phillips, New Beginnings Freewill Baptist
Pastor David Parsons, Zion Refuge Baptist	Pastor Bryan Schatzinger, Mansfield Calvary Chapel
Pastor David Bates, Galion Unity Freewill Baptist	Rabbi Bob Bauer, Crestline Beit El Elyon Messianic
Pastor Rick Wiseman, Promised Land Fellowship	Pastor Clyde Kerby, Hope & Healing Ministries
Pastor Layton Broome, Lakefork United Methodist	Pastor James Mitchell, Polk New Liberty Baptist
Pastor Randy Raynes, Mansfield Fellowship Baptist	Pastor John Temple, Trinity Community Church
Pastor Paul Lintern, Oakland Lutheran Church	Pastor Paul Lintern, Mansfield Southside Christian
Pastor James Spencer, Mansfield Peoples' Baptist	Pastor Joseph Yerger, First Evangelical Presbyterian
Pastor Tim Davis, Newville Church	Pastor Dallas Waggle, Lucas Foursquare Church
Pastor Lucian Baker, Christ the King Community	Pastor Jerrill Wyler, Bucyrus Wayside Chapel
Pastor Scott Maglott, Lexington Church Nazarene	Pastor Troy Wooten, Christian Life Center
Pastor Ferlie Yates, Hanna Road Church of GOD	Pastor Charles Burgess, West Salem Church of GOD
Bishop Rick Lewis, Shelby Church of GOD	Pastor Dink Porter, Mansfield Open Bible Church
Pastor Nickolas Kelly, North Liberty Church	Pastor Jason Price, Mansfield Victory Baptist

Pastor Chad Berry, Lexington New Liberty Baptist
Pastor Steve Schag, Shelby Calvary Baptist
Pastor Mark Cobb, Mansfield Providence Baptist
Pastor Les Vnasdale, Cornerstone Grace Brethren
Pastor Floyd Allen, Philippiian Community Church
Pastor David Ferrell, Mansfield Holiness Chapel
Pastor Matt Smith, Crestline Love Action Church
Pastor Tim George, Abundant Grace Fellowship
Pastor Brian Snow, Fredericktown First Baptist
Pastor Rich Hurlles, Plymouth LifePoint Church
Pastor Dan Zediker, Mansfield Mission Point
Pastor David Guild, Mansfield Foursquare Gospel
Pastor Ben Gregg, Plymouth Church of GOD

Pastor Patrick Bailey, North Bend Church of Brethren
Pastor El Akuchie, Godsfield House of Prayer
Pastors Les & Grace Farley, Lexington Irresistible Church
Pastor Matt Merendino, Clear Fork Alliance
Pastor Paul Matthewson, Maranatha Bible Church
Pastor Dana Gammill, Canton Cathedral of Life
Pastor Matt O’Harra, Bellville First Baptist Church
Pastor Bobby Edwards, Jesus is Alive Holiness Church
Pastor John Campos, Bowman Street Church of GOD
Pastor David Mahon, Galion Apostolic Assembly
Pastor Terry Garrett, Lexington Fusion Church
Elder James DeWeese, Mansfield Providence Church
Pastor Joe Maggelet, Ashland Fellowship Christian Athletes

These listed clergy endorsees are from congregations located in 7 counties throughout the state. Counties represented in the letter include: Richland (76), Crawford (8), Ashland (6), Knox (4), Morrow (4), Wayne (4), and Stark (2).

References:

(1)“Christians must change their strategy to keep graphic sex materials out of schools: expert,” by Brandon Showalter, Christian Post, March 25, 2021, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/christians-must-change-strategy-to-keep-graphic-sex-out-of-schools.html>

(2)“Ohio Public School District Spends \$134,000 In Legal Fees On Permits For ‘Gender-Neutral’ Bathrooms,” by Chrissy Clark March 22, 2021, The DailyWire, <https://www.dailywire.com/news/ohio-public-school-district-spends-134000-in-legal-fees-on-permits-for-gender-neutral-bathrooms>

(3)“Hilliard City Schools Orders Teachers and Students to Lobby for LGBT Legislation,” by Center for Christian Virtues, February 18, 2021, <https://www.ccv.org/news/breaking-news-hilliard-city-schools-orders-teachers-and-students-to-lobby-for-lgbt-legislation>

(4)“The 1,2,3’s of School Choice: What the research says about private school choice programs in America,” by edchoice.org, updated April 14, 2021, Slides 27-29, https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021-123s-SlideShare_FINAL.pdf