

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jenny Bittle. I was born and raised in North Dakota. I lived briefly in MN while obtaining my master's degree in child psychology. When I returned to North Dakota I worked as a school counselor for several years. The education of the children in our state is of great importance to me.

While working in the public schools I realized when I had children that public school was not where I wanted my children educated. Many of the ideologies that were being taught were against my husband and my religious beliefs. I have no problem with the schools educating our children in Mathematics, English, Science, etc. However, books being read in classrooms, movies being watched, etc went against our belief system and I felt as if religious views were being pushed on the children, just not our family's Christian belief system.

I now have three children attending Bishop Ryan Catholic School. I have a third-grader, a first-grader, and a preschool student. We couldn't be happier with the choice, even though we are not Catholic. At least at this school, I know exactly what my kids are being taught. There is a lot of transparency from the teachers, administrators, etc. about what is being taught week to week and month to month. As I said before in the public school there were wonderful teachers and they would choose fun books to read, stories to share, and videos to watch in their classrooms. However, much of the content shared went against our family's values and beliefs. Another example of how beliefs are presented is through the library. School libraries run like public libraries. However, my young children always have a parent with them helping them select books that we are okay with them reading. At a public school, children have access to books that can go against their parents' beliefs and there is no way for a parent to stop a child from checking out one of those books. Therefore, other belief systems are being presented without a parent's permission. In many ways, this is pushing belief systems (religion) upon students. To say that public schools do not have religion is false, they just have more agnostic or atheistic views that are pushed on the children. This is why I believe in this bill. All children deserve to be educated, but with the separation of church and state my children should not have to have beliefs we disagree with pushed upon them.

My understanding of the separation of church and state means the government cannot push religion on its people. Yet, by taking religion out of the school and still keeping social agendas in the education system you are pushing either atheistic or agnostic views on children which is why I believe in education choice. Setting money aside for parents to choose which educational choices are better for their children. Right now I have the choice to either send my kid to public school where they are told things that oppose our faith or I have to pay for my child to receive an education that more closely aligns with our belief system.

This is why educational choice is so vitally important to me. It isn't taking money from the public schools. Right now the state saves money because they don't have to pay to educate my children, I pay taxes, and yet I have to work extra jobs to pay for the close to \$19,000.00 my children's education will cost next year. I don't believe that this is right. Please consider that the

absence of religion is religion itself, and supporting that agenda allows the government to push a belief system on our most vulnerable citizens: school-aged children. We must give parents the option to choose how and where their children are educated. I strongly care about the education of all of the children in the state, and I would like all children to have equal access to educational choices without placing the financial burden to do so solely on parents.