

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2303

Chairman Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Daniel Martinez. I am a U.S. Air Force Veteran, current Department of the Air Force Civil Servant, husband to a retired U.S. Air Force Veteran with over 24 years of honorable service, and most importantly, a father to eight beautiful children.

I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2303 and respectfully request that you render a “DO PASS” on this bill.

My wife and I feel very strongly about the ability to choose an education for our children that best suits them and firmly believe that we, as parents, are *the* most qualified to make that decision. Furthermore, we believe that the manner in which their education is funded is a matter of justice and parental rights. On the matter of justice, it is the duty of our government to justly and fairly distribute both public benefits and burdens to *all* its citizens. It is not just that my wife and I simultaneously help fund a public school system for which our children will not benefit from, while we also pay for their tuition at the school that is actually educating them. On the matter of parental rights, it is my duty as a parent, to guide and direct the education of my children. The path that we have chosen for our own kids is directly in line with our religious and educational beliefs. Our right to choose the foundation upon which their futures will be built should not come down to whether I need to seek out additional employment and zero out our savings account, which is why a bill such as this is needed.

As I mentioned before, my wife and I are raising eight children. Currently our five school-aged kids are all enrolled in Bishop Ryan Catholic School. Over the last 12 years, three of them have attended six different schools, both public and private. We know without a doubt that they thrive in Catholic schools. Although it has been a heavy financial burden to pay their tuition, we feel it is the best choice for our them. Unfortunately, after this school year is over, that heavy financial burden will become an extreme financial burden. We will be faced with a very difficult decision: Who do we pull out of Bishop Ryan? My kindergartener who comes home excited to tell me that she loves Jesus and can't wait to see him one day? My 2nd grader who can recite his prayers in Latin and tells me about the beauty of First Holy Communion and Reconciliation? Or will it be my 7th grader who is autistic and ADHD and struggles every day, but finds solace in the wonderful teachers and staff that go above and beyond their jobs as educators to ensure that he finds his path towards success? Or will it be my Junior or Sophomore girls who excel in their academics, but more importantly have expressed a calling to serve God and their community which is a direct influence by the culture of giving that Bishop Ryan has instilled in them. I don't have an answer today.

I would like to comment on just one more thing: My wife and I have been together for almost 25 years; she is from northern Minnesota and I am from Southern Arizona. In 25 years the closest we have ever been to either of our families is an 8-hour drive. We have missed countless birthdays, weddings, holidays, and funerals. We always talked about where our forever home would be when she retired from the Air Force – and oh by the way, Minot, ND was never on the list. We dreamt of being close to family, either hers or mine, it didn't matter as long as we were close. Bishop Ryan

Catholic School has changed all of that. My wife retired last month, we bought a house in Minot and have decided that this is now our home. Bishop Ryan is the reason we stayed. If a school like that can have such an immense impact on the trajectory of an entire family, please consider how many more families could be helped if they too had the means to send their kids to a school of their choice.

Thank you all for allowing me to give this testimony.