

February 15, 2021

To: Montana House Education Committee

From: Matthew C. Brower, Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 329

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. I speak on behalf of the two Roman Catholic bishops of Montana.

I am here today to voice our support for House Bill 329.

Parenting is one of the most serious responsibilities one can be privileged to enjoy. One could argue there is no more important vocation than that of a parent, and while it certainly is true that many share in the responsibility of educating children, it is first and foremost the responsibility of parents. They are often the ones best positioned to make for their children the educational choices which allow them to thrive and excel. We believe House Bill 329 helps to empower parents of special needs students to make such choices.

Not every student does well in public school, nor does every student do well in private school. Children are unique and what they need to flourish can differ significantly from one to another. One size doesn't necessarily fit all. And this isn't always a question of finding a "better" school, but rather determining the circumstances and environment best suited for a particular child. For some with special needs who may do better in a private school but lack sufficient funds to make that a reality, the establishment of education savings accounts could help open doors to new educational opportunities allowing them to more readily reach their full potential.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I recommend a "do pass" on House Bill 329 and thank you for your time.