

## **CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO**

Testimony in support of HB 428

House Education & Career Readiness Committee

Jan. 30, 2018

Good morning Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking member Fedor and Committee Members. My name is Larry Keough. I am the associate director in education with the Catholic Conference of Ohio and legislative advocate for Catholic schools.

Our belief in religious liberty is our fundamental basis of support for HB 428. This legislation affords public school students with religious liberty by clarifying that they have the right of religious expression in the school houses and classrooms of our state.

Since protection of rights is an essential duty of government, it is appropriate for HB 428 to be a means to clarify that citizen students have the rights of religious conscience.

During Pope Francis' recent visit to the United States, he stated:

“With countless other people of good will, (American Catholics) are concerned that efforts to build a just and wisely ordered society respect their deepest concerns and their right to religious liberty. That freedom remains one of America's most precious possessions. And, as my brothers, the United States Bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it.”

Thank you.