

May, 24, 2022

This is proponent testimony for House Bill 529:

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 529. My name is Tom Hach, and I am in my third term as a member of the Riverside Local Schools Board of Education, and I speak today on behalf of myself and not for the board on which I serve.

I am excited because I believe the passage of HB 529 is an opportunity for building trust across all education stakeholders including parents, students, taxpayers, administrators, teachers, boards of education and others. Although trust is a commodity which is in short supply in our polarized world, we collectively need to focus on what unites us and not on what divides us, and it is the potential of generating trust which leads me to enthusiastically support this bill.

Through the online transparency this bill ushers in, parents will have 'at will' access to evaluate what their students are learning, students will be better able to determine which courses are right for them, taxpayers will be able to determine if their tax dollars are being well spent, administrators will be able to more efficiently disseminate curriculum to interested parties, teachers will be better able to engage with parents about past, current and future materials and assignments and boards of education will be able to ensure materials taught are within the scope of board approved curriculum.

While Ohio law currently gives parents and other stakeholders the right to review the curriculum taught in their children's schools, HB 529 brings this requirement into the internet age by having the curriculum placed online. It makes no sense to require interested parties to put in formal requests to view the materials being taught to Ohio students at taxpayer expense when it is already in electronic form. Where it makes sense, our goal should be to decentralize information to the public, and I am happy to say HB 529 does just this.

Additionally, we need to look to the public as a valuable check on what our institutions propose and due, just as environmental groups scrutinize new roads, bridges and other infrastructure. Experts know more and more about ever more narrow subject areas, and, while we do need expertise, experts sometimes lose perspective and become akin to the proverbial carpenter with a hammer who sees everything as if it were a nail. In the area of education, where virtually everyone in our society has spent significant time as a student in a classroom, the public has the experience and ability to be the sanity check on whether something is useful and appropriate to be part of a curriculum.

As a school board member, my highest aspiration is to help my district graduate upstanding citizens who understand America's Founding, know their history and have a life-long commitment to do their part to ensure self-government, through our representative republic, continues into perpetuity. The passage of HB 529 will go a long way toward building trust between all stakeholders, and makes my highest aspiration much more likely. I ask you to vote for House Bill 529.

Sincerely,  
Thomas Hach