



CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

Catholic Conference of Ohio
Proponent/SB 49
Senate Primary & Secondary Education Committee
Feb. 28, 2023

Good afternoon Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Committee members. My name is Larry Keough. I am the associate director for the Catholic Conference of Ohio and legislative advocate for 367 Catholic schools educating more than 109,000 students,

Our belief in religious liberty for all Ohioans is our fundamental basis of support for SB 49, which allows all K-12 students up to three excused absences per academic year to express their religion during observed religious holidays or religious activities.

During Pope Francis' visit to the United States a few years ago, 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.”

We are grateful to Senator Reynolds for bringing this bill forward to accommodate the religious activities of Ohio's K-12 students. Catholic students across Ohio should feel the comfort that their observance of Holy Days throughout the year will be excused absences under SB 49.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.