

PROPONENT TESTIMONY FOR SB 49

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram, my name is **Brennan Shanesy** and I represent the Catholic community. I am here to testify in support of SB49.

I grew up in a very devout Irish Catholic family just outside of Dayton, Ohio. It was always expected to attend mass every Sunday. My family and I were always involved in our local parish and faith community. I did years of volunteer work and service for our church. I was an altar server for all four years of high school and I would help prepare the church for mass. This is when I began to fall in love with the Catholic mass and when my relationship with Jesus started to grow.

During high school, I was in the Marching Band and I also ran Track. Sports and music were a very big part of my life. Although those things were very important to me, my faith in God always came first. I would always make sure I made it to mass every Sunday, as well as any Holy Day of Obligation. Aside from Christmas and Easter, this includes examples such as the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, and Good Friday. As Catholics, we have to attend mass on Holy Days of Obligation and if we don't, we consider it a mortal sin.

As someone who went to a public high school, we never got days like Holy Thursday and Good Friday off. It would sometimes make it hard to make mass during Holy Week because of school and the amount of homework that would be due that night or the following morning. I support SB49 because it will permit students to be absent up to three days for religious and spiritual reasons without it being an unexcused absence. Sometimes, I'd be forced to go to school on Holy Thursday and Good Friday because I would either have a test or quiz that could not be made up on a different date. Since I was in band and track, I would also not be allowed to participate in a meet or band concert that week if I were to miss a day of school, including days such as Holy Thursday and Good Friday. I would be forced to go to school on those days just so I could participate in practice and or in the meet that would take place that week.

I find it interesting that in a country that was founded on Judeo-Christian values, students in schools are still being penalized for missing days due to religious obligations. In the last line of Article I Section 7 of the Ohio Constitution it states, "...it shall be the duty of the general assembly to pass suitable laws to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of public worship, and to encourage schools and the means of instruction." I realize that some school districts may already have a policy in place that helps these students make up any missed academic work, but it needs to be universal and ALL school districts should be required to provide an opportunity for students to make up work, missed examinations or any other academic work when they miss a day due to religious reasons.

I hope that future generations of Catholics who are very passionate about their faith like I am are able to take days off during Holy Week without being marked as an unexcused absence, or be penalized for it in any sort of way. The state should not interfere on how a student decides to freely practice their religion. SB49 is long overdue, and I urge all of you to support it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.