

*Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram, my name is Pastor John Coats, and I represent a multiplicity of Christian Denominations and ministries who are members of the **Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Columbus and Vicinity**. I also serve as the Pastor of the Metropolitan Church of God in Christ. I am here to testify in support of SB49.*

As a Pentecostal clergyman, I have always believed and been taught that America is fundamentally a Christian nation. We may be predominantly Christian, however, the makeup of our nation is diverse in religious expression.

It is crucially important as Ohioans that we, through legislation, display fairness to all children and their parents, regardless of their cultures and religions. In essence, the Bible teaches in red letter scripture, Jesus' words, what is famously known as "The Golden Rule," which is to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

The holy scriptures of the Bible encourage us to "love thy neighbor as thyself". It would be Anti-Christian not to allow our neighbors of the Jewish faith, the Islamic faith, and other faiths to be able to take the time to recognize their God and cultures in certain designated times. We are judged tomorrow by the decisions that we make today to uplift others and respect their values.

It is my prayer that the members of this distinguished committee appreciate the critical nature of this legislation and repeat and strengthen the liberty that we rhetorically hold dear.