

**Testimony in proponent of H.B.117 – To enact The Pledge of Allegiance Act to require the Pledge of Allegiance in schools.**

**Cynthia Boehnlein, constituent of District 14**

Good afternoon, Chairman Fowler-Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson and the Education Committee. I am here today to support my representative from District 14, Mr. Sean Brennan, and the H.B. 117 To enact The Pledge of Allegiance Act to require the Pledge of Allegiance in schools.

Let me introduce myself. I am a 20-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) of Ohio and belong to Unit 2 in the City of Parma. I am the District 13 President, which is Cuyahoga County, and also serve as the ALA National Central Division Legislative Chairman. My passion is volunteering at Buckeye Girls State, where I serve as an advisor to our version of the Legislative Service Commission. This is a one-week government camp, that covers running local, county and state governing for high school girls that have just finished their junior year. Today I am representing our core values of Americanism and love of “Old Glory”.

I have a military family background. My father served in the Marines during the Korean War. My husband was in the Army and the last group drafted for Vietnam. My son served 8 years in the Army and is currently in the Army Reserves. He was in basic training when the towers fell. My daughter in-law is a Navy veteran who currently works in the Foreign Service for the Department of State. So yes, I have a military family, and we believe in this country.

I fully support the initiative to pass the HB117. I believe the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance instills patriotism in our young adults. When I was a child, my grandmother taught me to stand up with my hand over my heart and honor the flag when the color guards would march by in a parade. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited every morning at school, and I meant every word of it. I would have tears in my eyes when I saw the flag rise up the flagstaff at the Olympics when we took gold. But today you almost cringe, wondering what an Olympian will do while on the podium.

These issues reach further than that. Not enforcing reciting the Pledge has deleterious effects on American pride, patriotism and national security. Yes, I believe it is a national security issue in the long run. Less than 1% of American citizens enlist in the armed services. What is the status of our Ohio National Guard? And it is getting worse. It is a fact that our military is lagging behind China and Russia. Why is that? Do our students not know how important it is to protect this country? To stand united under one flag no matter what your nationality, creed, or preference? To show simple respect for the flag during the National Anthem? It is a fact that our military is lagging behind China and Russia.

No, many youths do not have a sense of meaning or respect to themselves, let alone to the country. If we instill a sense of belonging by teaching the meaning of the Pledge in the schools, saying it every morning, we will see increases in enlistment and a decrease in complacency down the road.

I believe in cause and effect. If you take away education about the flag, it's meaning and teaching about the dedicated men and women that gave so much, and some gave all for this country, you get complacency, which is dangerous for Ohio.

I draw your attention to an answer to the problem - Sec. 3313.6031, Lines 59 through 62, Paragraph (C) In the interests of promoting excellent citizenship skills, schools and teachers are highly encouraged to develop and implement lessons related to the American flag and pledge of allegiance.

Let's get back that Americanism spirit we all experienced after 9/11, where we were united under on flag.

We have to start somewhere. We start with the Pledge of Allegiance. We start with Ohio.

Thank you, Madam Chairman, for this opportunity to speak before the Education Committee. Thank you, Representative Sean Brennan, for inviting me.