

## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 117**

Submitted to the Ohio House of Representatives

### **Submitted by:**

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### **Members of the Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in strong support of House Bill 117, which establishes a uniform policy for the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in Ohio's public schools.

My name is Edward Kosek. I have worked in the field of public education for over 20 years and just recently successfully defended my dissertation to earn a Doctorate of Philosophy in Urban Education from Cleveland State University. Beginning in August, I will "officially" assume the position of Principal at Sandusky High School here in the great state of Ohio. I proudly served in the United States Marine Corps, and my daughter continued that legacy of service as a member of the United States Air Force. Our family understands deeply the meaning of patriotism, unity, and civic duty.

During the 2012-2013 school year, I served as an educator in the state of Texas, where each school day began with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag followed by the Texas Pledge. This daily practice was far more than a routine; it was a moment that united students and staff in reflection and reverence for the values that bind us as Americans.

House Bill 117 ensures that every school district across Ohio adopts a clear and consistent policy for the daily opportunity to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Importantly, this legislation does not compel participation, nor does it infringe on any student or staff member's constitutional rights. It simply affirms the opportunity to engage in this long standing civic tradition using the exact wording set forth in federal law—4 U.S.C. § 4.

I am also particularly supportive of Section (C) of the bill, which encourages schools and teachers to develop lessons around the American flag and the Pledge of Allegiance. This is a

powerful educational opportunity to engage students in conversations about history, civics, sacrifice, and the values of our republic.

We are a nation of many backgrounds, faiths, and beliefs, yet we are united under one flag and one Constitution. The Latin phrase *E Pluribus Unum*—"Out of many, one"—embodies the core of our national identity. In a time when division too often dominates the headlines, reaffirming unity in our public institutions, especially our schools, is both timely and essential. While September 11th, 2001 was a day that those of us who lived through it, will never forget. However, I will also never forget the unity in the days that followed. It seemed as if almost every home on East 76th Street in the Slavic Village neighborhood of Cleveland proudly flew an American flag regardless of political affiliation, religion, or race.

Symbols like the Pledge of Allegiance matter! They inspire reflection, responsibility, and pride. For veterans like myself, and for military families across this state, the daily recitation of the Pledge honors the service and sacrifice of those who have defended our freedoms.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge the Ohio House of Representatives to support the passage of House Bill 117. Let us work together to foster citizenship, unity, and pride by laying the foundation for future generations of Ohioans within our schools.

Thank you for your time, service, and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Edward D. Kosek