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Chair Fowler-Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan and Members of the Education Committee. Thank for you the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 486, The Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act. In order to submit a more thorough discussion for the record I submit a more detailed written account that will be accompanied by a more abbreviated in person testimony.

The Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act does not create a new law it clarifies the law. I was happy to read Jesse Balmert’s report that “Gary Daniels, chief lobbyist for the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio, said the First Amendment already allows instructors to teach about the impact of religion on historical figures and events...”<sup>1</sup> In full transparency, he still does not like the Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act and I will be eager to hear why. However, it is important to note that he agrees that the law already permits what is affirmed in House Bill 486.

It is also worth noting that The Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act does not impose new regulations or mandates on our already overburdened educators. It simply removes the invisible shackles that often hinder a full and transparent teaching of American History. We are not inviting our instructors to teach doctrine or to proselytize. We are simply affirming for them the law as it already exists.

The United States of America stands alone in the history of nations due to the overwhelming influence of Christianity on the foundation of this nation. No other philosophy and no other religion comes close. Yet our educational system tends to ignore this undeniable truth. On this topic, Noah Webster wrote in the preface of his 1828 dictionary,

The United States commenced their existence under circumstances wholly novel and unexampled in the history of nations. They commenced with civilization, with learning, with science, with constitutions of free government, and with that best gift of God to man, the Christian religion.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/politics/2025/10/06/gop-lawmakers-want-more-public-students-to-learn-about-christian-heritage-first-amendment/86442248007/>

Their population is now equal to that of England; in arts and sciences, our citizens are very little behind the most enlightened people on earth; in some respects, they have no superiors; and our language, within two centuries, will be spoken by more people in this country, than any other language on earth, except the Chinese, in Asia, and even that may not be an exception.

Despite the academic freedom that we have established already exists there is an illusion of prohibition from teaching certain historical facts due to the aggressive nature of organizations such as the ACLU and hate groups like the Freedom from Religion Foundation. Teachers have expressed to me a fear that teaching historical facts in a **non-proselytizing manner** would be considered proselytization and could warrant reprimands, lawsuits, or even cost them their careers. One school superintendent even told me that it was against the law. It is not. I failed to convince him otherwise.

This frustration lay dormant within me until the assassination of Charlie Kirk. Charlie was always kind but direct. He welcomed conversation, especially with those who did not agree with him. Regretfully, many reinterpret alternate views as hate and cannot tolerate an opposing view. At the core of Charlie's beliefs and his love for America was his avid faith. When asked what he wanted to be remembered for, he said for his courage and his faith. Charlie understood that there was a connection between the historic roots of America which are inseparable from the predominant faith of our founding fathers. That is what he was killed for.

I believe that if students were free to learn about the historic influence of Christianity on their freedoms there would be less hate and less violence. I also believe that no history should be off limits or even perceived to be off limits by our educators. It is possible to teach the accurate history of the impact of Christianity on our nation without proselytizing and suggesting to students that they should be Christians.<sup>2</sup>

I frequently hear that students learn how religion was used to justify atrocious acts such as slavery but seldom hear it taught that the majority of Christians rejected that ideology and were in fact the leaders of the abolition movement. I often hear of Christianity being degraded in the classroom but seldom hear of its historical merits. Is that because there are none or is it because teachers are uninformed or afraid?

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that I have been asked to carry legislation requiring the teaching of the Bible in public schools. I declined because government schools should not be in the business of teaching doctrines. That is different that teaching historical facts.



I often hear about the “separation of church and state” but almost never hear it accurately defined or even historically examined. It is either erroneously ascribed to the Constitution or to Thomas Jefferson when in fact the phrase originated with Roger Williams who happened to be a pastor and a politician.<sup>3</sup> Williams was chased out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for his religious beliefs and fled north with the help of the native Americans where he established Providence with the foundation of religious liberty. Williams derived the concept from the fifth chapter of Isaiah likening the vineyard to the church and the wild grapes to the world (government).

This philosophy flowed down through the ages to John Locke, who himself was a devoted Christian writing two treatises in defense of Christianity as well as extensive works on government later relied upon by our founding fathers.

It is a well-documented fact that while Jefferson was feared by some Christians due to his unorthodox religious beliefs, he was supported by the prominent Baptist pastor, John Leland. Shortly before a visit from Leland at the Whitehouse, Jefferson received a letter from the Danbury Baptist Association which feared for their religious liberty under his presidency. There is little doubt that Jefferson and Leland discussed this issue before he replied. It was in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association that he assured the churches that the Constitution had erected a “Wall of Separation between the church and state,” borrowing the words of Roger Williams. The next day, he invited Pastor Leland to preach in the Capitol.

Leland, in fact, is in no small part responsible for the first amendment that he and Jefferson discussed. He was an anti-federalist from Madison’s home state of Virginia. Madison’s election to the ratifying committee was in doubt and he travelled from the capital in New York to solicit Leland’s support. Leland presented him with a list of ten objections to the proposed constitution. He insisted on the necessity of a bill of rights and most importantly religious liberty.<sup>4</sup> Madison changed his position and agreed to advocate for a bill of rights. Leland endorsed him and Madison kept his word. The top signature on the Bill of Rights belongs to another pastor, Fredrick Augustus Muhlenberg, who also happened to be the first Speaker of the House. Contrary to popular opinion, the doctrine of the separation of church and state originated from Christian teaching and influence rather than

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<sup>3</sup> The Bloody Tennent of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience, Roger Williams, 1644

<sup>4</sup> <https://csac.history.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/281/2018/06/Leelands-Objections.pdf>

secular advocacy. It was intended to protect religious expression rather than silence it.

Nevertheless, the Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act is not about religious expression. It is about historical accuracy.

It wasn't until 1947 that anyone understood the separation of church and state to mean anything different. A member of the Ku Klux Klan from Alabama managed to find his way to the United States Supreme Court. In *Everson v. Board of Education*, Justice Hugo Black stated that the first amendment erected a wall of separation between church and state and added his opinion that this wall must be "high and impregnable."<sup>5</sup> Since that day, many have falsely assumed that the first amendment was designed to silence any positive reference to God or religion in the public square.

If we were to remove Christianity from American history, we would have no American history. The American story would not be the same. Deconstruction and Post Structuralism philosophies have unjustifiably taken an eraser to the pages of history, but they cannot change the facts. It is indisputable that the further we go back in history, the more accurately our history books documented the influence of Christianity on American History.

Donald S. Lutz documented the constitutional origins of our nation in a study conducted in the mid 1980's. Researching the citations in political discourse between 1760 – 1805 he discovered that 2.7% of the quotes came from Hume and 2.9% from Locke. Montesquieu and Locke rated much higher at 7.9 and 8.3% respectively. Together they achieved 21.8% of the citations in political discourse during the founding era. One source outscored them all. Citations from the Scriptures made up 34% of all discourse during this era. St. Paul alone was cited as frequently and Montesquieu and Blackstone while the book of Deuteronomy was cited nearly twice as often as Locke.<sup>6</sup>

The first first lady to ever be called First Lady and the first college educated first lady, Lucy Hayes, wrote an essay for her graduation from Ohio Wesleyan College entitled "The Influence of Christianity on the Prosperity of Nations." In this work, she documented America's humble beginnings with these words describing the pilgrims,

<sup>5</sup> Our Lost Constitution, Senator Mike Lee, 2015, See Chapter Four: The Supreme Court's Klansman

<sup>6</sup> The Origins of American Constitutionalism, Donald S. Lutz, 1988, pp. 140-141



We see them a small band leaving their native land to obtain freedom of thought and worship...The framers of their laws were righteous men, they framed them on Christian principles, and whatever they performed, was to the glory of God. Let Christianity be banished from our land, and this fair republic, would be dashed from the high position which it has reached, lose all her power and in place of the peace, prosperity and happiness which are now seen, oppression, carnage and misery, would be their heritage.

The liberties that American's enjoy, religious and otherwise, are owing to the influence of Christianity. However, religious liberty is not extended to Christians alone, otherwise it would not be liberty. It belongs to every sect and creed. Muslims, Hindus, Seekers, atheists and agnostics all enjoy their liberties to believe or not believe according to their conscience because religious liberty and the separation of church and state which is a distinct Christian value.

Christians have endured a long history of persecution, including from others who even called themselves Christian. These struggles did not end instantly upon landing on our shores. Admittedly, they often included conflicts between one sect of Christianity and another. Those struggles, too, deserve to be discussed. We cannot afford to hide from our history. Our children ought to learn it and our teachers are free to teach it. But we cannot afford to discriminate against the history that prevailed in providing the most noble and free nation in the history of the world.

Abraham Lincoln aptly addressed the conflict between one interpretation of Scripture and another in his second inaugural address. Nothing is more certain than the truth that Christians have not always fully embraced what it means to be Christian. Those failures have been disastrous yet when we succeed, so does our nation. Note Lincoln's observation.

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered ~ that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses for it must needs be that offenses come but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we

shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which in the providence of God must needs come but which having continued through His appointed time He now wills to remove and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him. Fondly do we hope ~ fervently do we pray ~ that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword as was said three thousand years ago so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

Finally, I draw your attention to the eyewitness testimony of one founder to another. On June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1813, John Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson recalling their grand accomplishments and wrote:

“The general Principles, on which the Fathers Achieved Independence, were the only Principles in which that beautiful Assembly of young Gentlemen could Unite, and these Principles only could be intended by them in their Address, or by me in my Answer. And what were these general Principles? I answer, the general Principles of Christianity, in which all those Sects were United”.

These historical truths and debates deserve to be remembered for generations to come so I urge you to support academic freedom by favorably reporting HB 486, The Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act. I now yield to my esteemed joint sponsor, Representative Mike Dovilla.

Thank you for your kind attention. I am happy to answer your questions.  
Respectfully submitted,

State Representative Gary Click  
Ohio House District 88



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