

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House Education Committee; thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony for HB 486.

My name is Nicole Smith, I am a young recent graduate from The Ohio State University, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB 486.

This legislation is both reasonable and necessary in affirming the right of educators to teach accurate and verifiable historical accounts of religion's influence on American history.

Importantly, HB 486 does not impose any mandate on schools or instructors. It simply permits educators to include the positive impact of religion, particularly Christianity, on America's founding, culture, and moral development when teaching American history. Opponents have admitted that such instruction is already legal under existing law yet continue to oppose the bill for reasons that appear more ideological than substantive.

This bill reinforces what our Constitution already protects: the freedom to teach factual history without fear of political reprisal. Teaching about religion's role in shaping the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the abolition and civil rights movements, and even our national motto, "In God We Trust," is not proselytizing- it is telling the truth. Ignoring these elements erases essential parts of our national story and weakens civic understanding.

By clearly stating that such instruction is consistent with the First Amendment, HB 486 gives teachers clarity and confidence to present a complete picture of our nation's heritage. In an era when ignorance of history often breeds division and hostility, this bill promotes education rooted in context and fact.

I urge you to support this legislation and affirm that teaching the historical influence of faith on America is not only permissible, but it is essential to preserving an honest understanding of our shared past.

Thank you to Representatives Click and Dovilla for introducing this legislation and to the members of the Ohio House Education Committee for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

Nicole Smith