

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

My name is Elijah Mergott, I'm a former public school student, the president of the University of Dayton's college republicans, and a first generation Catholic convert. My faith, the largest branch of the Christian faith, is by far and away the most important thing to me, personally. Considering how much I love this faith, I consider myself blessed to live in a country in which throughout its history, members of the Christian faith, inspired by their love of God, did so much to selflessly help the lives of people of all races, creeds and indeed, other religions. From the inspiration which led to the very founding of our amazing country itself, to its role in ending chattel slavery, the historical record is replete with clear examples of how religion has positively impacted America. So, then, it seems rather uncontroversial to simply clarify in writing that the teaching of these truths is allowed in the public schools and colleges of Ohio, as the primary goal of education should always, always, always be to teach the truth. However, in this age, where anti christian bias, which I have experienced personally, while perhaps not the prevailing opinion, is still unfortunately common, even the simple proposal to protect the teaching of history seems to have been made controversial.

The opposition to the bill, from what I've heard, do not seem to dispute the historical accuracy of many of the topics which the bill seeks to protect. Even Mr. Gary Daniels of the ACLU put forth in his testimony that it was "OK, and historically accurate, to say many of those motivated to end slavery in the U.S. were motivated by their religious beliefs." So if the point of this bill is simply to protect the teaching of these topics, then again, there should be no reason to so strongly oppose this bill.

In summation, I strongly believe that, across the history of our great nation, religion, specifically the Christian religion, has many, many times done much service to the prosperity of America. And while educating about these instances shouldn't be opposed or even be controversial, considering the erroneous legal attacks that have been levied at the faith by organizations like the ACLU, it is imperative that measures like HB 486 should be put in place to protect historical educators. On behalf of all my fellow students here in Ohio, I would implore you to put your support behind this bill. Thank you.