

Proponent Testimony for HB 486

Chase Gillson, President, College Republicans at the University of Toledo

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

My name is Chase Gillson, and I serve as President of the College Republicans at the University of Toledo. I stand in strong support of this legislation because it honors the legacy of Charlie Kirk, whose influence on youth and civic life continues to inspire students across Ohio. I also believe our history curriculum should more fully reflect the role of Christianity and biblical principles in shaping America's founding and continued success.

Charlie Kirk devoted his life to engaging young people in the values of liberty, responsibility, and faith-based service. When I learned that HB 486 is formally titled the *Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act*, I felt compelled to speak because his mission reflects what many students like me seek — a deeper understanding of how Christian ideals guided the formation of our nation, and how preserving those principles is essential to maintaining our freedoms today.

In my own education, I often found that American history courses focused on political events, wars, and economic developments but gave only passing mention to the religious convictions that motivated our Founding Fathers and influenced the creation of our system of government. This bill provides an opportunity to correct that imbalance. By affirming that educators may freely teach about the positive impact of Christianity in American history, HB 486 encourages the kind of honest and respectful civic dialogue that Charlie Kirk championed.

Some opponents argue that this bill changes nothing or is unnecessary. I respectfully disagree. While current law may already allow discussion of religion in history, many teachers remain uncertain or hesitant to do so. HB 486 offers clarity and confidence — removing ambiguity and affirming that faith-based contributions to our nation's story are not only permissible but vital to a complete and accurate education. By honoring Charlie Kirk's legacy, this legislation sends a powerful message: the role of faith in American life is something to be understood and appreciated, not ignored.

Finally, as a student, I believe that understanding the faith-influenced roots of our culture does not weaken our history — it strengthens it. It reminds us that the ideals of service, selfless leadership, and moral courage are foundational to who we are as Americans. Upholding Charlie Kirk's legacy through HB 486 ensures that future generations of students can draw both inspiration and knowledge from the full story of our heritage.

Thank you, members of the Committee, for your time and attention to this important issue.