

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 486 (The Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act)

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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 Stephanie Reynolds, and I am a citizen of Findlay in Hancock County, Ohio. I am also a proud member of the Young Republicans of Hancock County, which has strengthened my commitment to civic engagement and the preservation of our nation's founding values. I come before the committee as a former college student who stepped away temporarily, with plans to return and further my education. That experience allows me to deeply appreciate the importance of comprehensive and truthful instruction. From this perspective, I write in strong support of House Bill 486, also known as the Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act, because it represents an important step toward restoring honesty, courage, and moral clarity in how we teach American history.

As someone who values education deeply, I've come to realize that our schools have a responsibility not only to inform, but to form—to help young people understand where their freedoms come from and the moral principles that uphold them. Our nation's story cannot be told truthfully if we erase the role of faith from it. Christianity, in particular, was woven into the lives, words, and hopes of those who founded this country. Teaching that truth is not a violation of the First Amendment; it is an act of intellectual integrity.

Charlie Kirk spent much of his life encouraging students to stand up for truth and to have the courage to speak about faith and freedom, even in environments that are often hostile to both. His voice inspired thousands of young people to think critically and love their country unapologetically. Charlie Kirk did not merely pass away on September 10, 2025; he was politically assassinated—a loss that shocked and saddened those who valued his courage and vision. Yet his influence endures. HB 486 honors his legacy in a meaningful way by ensuring that students are free to learn the truth about how faith shaped the American experiment.

When I read through the bill's analysis, I was impressed by its comprehensive and factual scope. It does not push doctrine; it simply allows teachers to discuss historical realities that have often been overlooked. For example, it mentions the Mayflower Compact, modeled on a church covenant; the First Thanksgiving, held in gratitude to God; and George Washington's Farewell Address, in which he called religion and morality "indispensable supports" to political prosperity. These are verifiable, well-documented facts, and understanding them adds depth to the lessons students receive about American origins.

The bill also highlights the religious appeals in the Declaration of Independence, which refer to a Creator and divine Providence multiple times. It acknowledges Benjamin Franklin's call for prayer at the Constitutional Convention, an event that reflected humility and moral seriousness among our founders. It also highlights how religious revival movements such as the First and Second Great Awakenings influenced public reforms and civil rights, demonstrating that faith has often been a driving force behind progress and justice.

When I was in school, much of our history curriculum was factual but hollow. We learned dates, wars, and speeches, but not the deeper spiritual motivations that drove many of our nation's most significant figures. Learning that Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. rooted their calls for justice in biblical truth and faith in God helps students see that religion has often been a force for good—one that promotes equality, moral strength, and perseverance. Omitting that connection doesn't make education neutral; it makes it incomplete.

HB 486 does not force belief or religious participation. It simply ensures that teachers who wish to present the whole truth, including the positive influence of religion, can do so without fear of backlash or legal threat. As the bill states, this is consistent with the First Amendment. Education should be about accuracy and balance, not erasure or avoidance.

Some opponents admit this bill changes no law, yet they still oppose it. That suggests that the resistance is ideological, not practical. If nothing changes legally, then there should be no controversy in clarifying that teachers have the freedom to include this history in their curriculum. Unfortunately, organizations like the ACLU have often used ambiguity to intimidate schools and universities, warning them that mentioning religion could lead to lawsuits. That kind of fear has

silenced teachers and narrowed learning. HB 486 provides reassurance and clarity that teaching about faith's role in history is not proselytizing but truth-telling.

I have seen firsthand how younger generations are losing connection to the moral and historical foundations of this country. Many students today are taught to be cynical about faith, skeptical about patriotism, and disconnected from the principles that sustain freedom. Teaching about how religion helped shape our values—from the fight for independence to the struggle for civil rights—helps restore pride, gratitude, and perspective. It teaches that America's story is not perfect, but it is redeemable, and faith has always been part of that redemption.

By supporting HB 486, we are not mandating belief. We are affirming honesty. The classroom should be a place of curiosity and understanding, not censorship. We affirm that teachers and professors can explore George Washington's prayers, the sermons that inspired the revolution, or the moral convictions that led to the end of slavery, and that doing so is educationally valid.

Passing this bill would send a powerful message: that Ohio stands for academic freedom, historical truth, and moral courage. It would show that we trust our educators to teach responsibly and our students to think critically. It would also honor the memory of Charlie Kirk by furthering the cause he dedicated his life to—awakening young Americans to faith, freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

If even one student walks away from an American history class inspired by the moral conviction of Washington, or the faith-driven perseverance of Dr. King, this bill will have done its job.

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

Sincerely,

Stephanie Reynolds

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