

Written Testimony of Jan Nesor, PhD
HB486 Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act
Ohio House Education Committee
November 12, 2025

Chair Arthus, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the Education Committee

Chair and members of the committee, my name is Jan Nesor. I'm a resident of Columbus, and an emeritus professor of education policy at the Ohio State University. To be clear, I do not represent Ohio State University, and am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

I write to raise concerns about the "Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act" and to urge Committee members to vote against the bill.

HB486 would introduce radical and unwise changes into the way curricula are created and controlled in Ohio's public schools.

First, HB486 represents an effort by the legislature to claim authority to micromanage public school curricula. The legislation prescribes a set of specific topics, supposedly relevant from middle school through university. As both proponents and opponents at past hearings have noted, the bill is not simply about the right to teach about the role of religion in American history – something the schools already have -- but instead promulgates a partial version of that history focused on aspects of protestant Christianity. Proponents support this. Opponents note that the proposed version is historically inadequate. For example, it encourages teachers to ignore or obscure problematic uses of Christianity in American history, such as its role in the Ku Klux Klan or in the support of slavery. At the same time, it allows teachers to ignore the many other religions practiced in the US as well as the spiritual beliefs of indigenous peoples.

Second, and equally concerning, the bill would devolve control over history curricula to the individual teacher. Any teacher, substitute teacher, or instructor addressing American history would be given the legal authority to introduce their own versions of the topics laid out in the legislation, whether or not these aligned with state standards or district-level curricular guides (or indeed with our best historical knowledge). The result in time would be a curricular mish-mash in which one class differed from another depending on the particular teacher. Moreover, by putting the authority at the level of the individual teacher, the bill makes that teacher vulnerable to outside pressures. It creates a situation where ideologically-driven administrators or outside groups could harrass and pressure individual teachers to teach the curriculum detailed in the legislation. Such a system of teacher-specific curricular control makes no more sense for history than it would for mathematics or science instruction. We have state and district-level curriculum standards and guides for a reason. HB486 represents a questionable effort to do an end-run around them.

I urge you to reject HB486.

Sincerely,
Jan Nesor