

Thank you, Chair Fowler Arthur, and members of the Education Committee, for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 486.

I support Representative Gary Click's House Bill 486, the Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act, which affirms that it is not illegal for Ohio educators to teach about the positive aspects of Christianity in the founding of our nation. As someone who is not personally Christian, I believe an objective observer can and should acknowledge the profound good that Christian people and thought contributed to this country's formation. This influence is an overarching reality, far greater than the sum of a few historical anecdotes referenced in the bill. Its view of the human condition and values shape core principles and institutions that define America.

While opponents argue that the bill creates no new mandates making it redundant or implicitly endorsing a specific viewpoint, this misses a crucial bigger picture.

Consider this, surveys of students show most graduate without even the most basic knowledge of American history, and if they remember anything it is usually negative, like dismissing America's founding fathers as just a bunch of white slave owners. What we are doing now isn't effective. True multi-viewpoint instruction must include and even prioritize the positives to provide a fuller, more accurate narrative. This necessarily encompasses the profound role that Christian faith played in shaping the founders' worldview, from the emphasis on inalienable rights to the moral frameworks that influenced the Constitution's architecture of liberty. Missing this connection doesn't promote neutrality. It distorts history by sidelining objectively significant influences that propelled the nation's trajectory.

Moreover, the notion that we can teach the past in a purely neutral manner is itself a dangerous myth. Does any school dispassionately and equally present the Allied perspective and the Nazi perspective as two equal viewpoints? History is not just a collection of random facts of equal value, curated so nobody is offended. If so, then those facts have no meaning beyond passing a mandatory classroom quiz or test before promptly forgetting them. Which is exactly what students do today. History was not neutral to those who lived it, and it is completely ineffective to teach it as a neutral collection of mostly negative trivia.

This one-sidedness stems from modern education being captured by an ideology we've seen before, one that speaks of diversity and inclusion while suppressing and purging conservative, religious people and those with traditional values from the profession, sidelining the actual builders of society in favor of new heroes of the cultural revolution. Their hostility is revealed by the fact that if they truly believed this bill was meaningless, as they claim, they would not react with such open hostility to it. A value structure tied to a divine foundation for a strong society threatens those who seek to replace it in the lives of the next generation's children. Objectively speaking, students today and our society in general are being harmed by this agenda, just as

other societies that went down the same path with their educational systems suffered decline. For instance, the USSR's enforcement of state atheism in schools created a vacuum that contributed to moral decay, social instability, and the regime's eventual collapse.

I can't help but notice a correlation from our own educational past. When schools emphasized uplifting stories, like George Washington's honesty or Abraham Lincoln's integrity, students emerged not only better informed but also more inspired and civically engaged. To be more precise, because they were positively inspired, they graduated much better informed. Every successful society worldwide has built its educational foundation on honoring the past, using positive historical narratives, including religious ones, to instill values, resilience, and a sense of shared purpose before delving into critiques and alternate viewpoints. Great nations of history, like ancient Rome actively taught positive unifying stories, such as the founding legend of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a she-wolf, to foster national pride and cohesion. Similarly, if we were in a country like Japan, schools would naturally focus on the importance of Buddhism and Shintoism in shaping the nation's identity and values, even for non-believers, as a way to promote cultural continuity. It is in everyone's best interest to support a healthy, proud majority narrative that is accepting of free inquiry into alternative viewpoints, because the alternative, eroding shared narratives, leads to social decay, fragmentation, and ultimately collapse, sinking us all with it. In contrast, today's hyper-focus on deconstruction without reconstruction leaves young people disillusioned, lacking the motivational anchors that foster achievement.

While HB 486 is largely symbolic in its immediate effects, it must spark a vital shift toward genuine viewpoint diversity, one that highlights the positive faith-based viewpoints that undeniably contributed to America's formation and success. This isn't about mandating ideology. It's about ensuring our history is taught holistically, empowering students to appreciate the full spectrum of what made this country exceptional. In a modern world devoid of meaning, where jobs and societal functions are increasingly consumed by software and institutions like the media and government cannot hide obvious decay, it is more imperative than ever to revert and refocus on the history and value structures that propelled prior generations to meet the challenges of their time and build a great nation to help inspire a new generation today to do the same.