



November 5th, 2025

Chair Sarah Fowler Arthur  
Vice Chair Mike Odioso  
Ranking Member Sean P. Brennan  
House Education Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

**Re: Interested Party to HB 486 – The Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act**

Dear Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and Members of the House Education Committee,

On behalf of the Sikh Coalition, we write to provide feedback and raise significant concerns regarding HB 486, *The Charlie Kirk American Heritage Act*. Several provisions in the bill raise questions about how religious content may be presented in a way that aligns with constitutional requirements and maintains neutrality in public education. We are concerned that, depending on implementation, certain directives in HB 486 could create confusion about how educators should navigate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. These questions relate to whether the bill's instructional examples might be interpreted as privileging one religious tradition, which could affect how students of different backgrounds experience classroom instruction.

The Sikh Coalition is the largest Sikh civil rights organization in the United States. Founded after 9/11 to combat bias and defend religious freedom, we now lead national efforts to ensure equal protection under the law and inclusion for all faith communities. Our work includes advocating for accurate, constitutionally appropriate education about religion so that every student can learn in a safe and respectful environment. We are attentive to how policies may create the perception of religious preference in public education, and as such feel compelled to offer commentary on this bill.

Public education must serve every student, regardless of belief. The Sikh Coalition firmly believes that teaching about religion—its history, diversity, and influence on society—is not only permissible under the law but essential to fostering mutual respect in pluralistic classrooms. However, HB 486's focus on Christianity as the primary lens for understanding American freedom and culture raises questions about balance and inclusivity, as well as how resultant pedagogical approaches would align with the pluralistic principles that guide both public education and our broader civic landscape. Directing educators to emphasize one religious viewpoint as inherently positive may blur the distinction between teaching about a religion and promoting belief in it.

The Sikh community knows firsthand the tangible threat to inclusion, safety, and civic trust posed by bills like HB 486 in its current form. For students of minority faiths or nonreligious backgrounds, legislation of this nature may inadvertently create feelings of exclusion or reinforce existing vulnerabilities to bias-based bullying. Sikh students in particular, who already experience [disproportionate rates of bias-based bullying](#) across the country, could experience a heightened risk of stigmatization in classrooms where one religion is officially prioritized over others. The consequences of that message extend beyond the classroom, shaping how young people understand who belongs in American society and who does not.

Several specific provisions—including the directive in Sections 3320.10 and 3320.11 to emphasize only the ‘positive impacts’ of religion, the exclusively Christian examples provided, and the bill’s broad statements about Christianity—may create practical challenges of the bill for educators and administrators who are required to distinguish between instruction and endorsement. And while the legislative findings in Section 3320.09 assert that highlighting Christianity’s positive impacts does not constitute proselytization, it is unclear how the bill envisions teachers maintaining neutrality when other faith traditions do not receive comparable treatment in the bill’s examples. By blurring the boundary between instruction and endorsement, HB 486 could place educators and school districts in legally precarious positions while diverting attention away from the objective needs of all of Ohio’s students: critical thinking skills, historical accuracy, and mutual respect. The bill’s directive to emphasize the “positive influence of Christianity” could also conflict with historical completeness. Genuine education requires a complete and honest account of history, not a curated narrative that celebrates one faith while omitting the harm done in its name. From the displacement of Indigenous peoples to the defense of slavery and segregation, Christian rhetoric was repeatedly invoked to justify oppression. Excluding these historical complexities may unintentionally limit students’ ability to fully understand and think critically about our nation’s past.

Ohio’s current academic standards already allow educators to teach about the influence of religion on history in a balanced and constitutionally appropriate manner. However, these standards still fall short of explicitly naming or acknowledging all faith traditions, such as Sikhi, which limits opportunities for students to learn about the full spectrum of world religions that have shaped societies and values. We encourage consideration of approaches that ensure instruction about religion remains balanced and reflective of the diverse traditions that have shaped society. **For these reasons, we respectfully request that the committee closely examine the provisions of HB 486 that may have unintended impacts on inclusivity, neutrality, and educational practice.** Promoting one religion as inherently virtuous could undermine both academic integrity and the diverse civic fabric of Ohio’s classrooms. Ohio’s students deserve to learn the full, complex story of our nation’s past, shaped by many faiths and philosophies.

The Sikh Coalition’s work is guided by the Sikh principle of sarbat da bhala—for the good of all. We stand with communities of every background in ensuring education is inclusive, accurate, and free from religious or political coercion; unfortunately, several components of HB 486 raise

questions about whether it aligns with those principles. We thank you for your consideration of our perspective.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gurvir Singh Sidhu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Aasees Kaur  
Community Development Director  
The Sikh Coalition

Gurvir Singh Sidhu  
State Policy Manager  
The Sikh Coalition