



October 10, 2025

Chairman, Vice Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am **Bishop John T. Coats, II**, and I have the honor of serving as **President of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Columbus and Vicinity**, Central Ohio's oldest and continuously serving body of clergy. For more than a century, this Alliance has united pastors and faith leaders devoted to advancing moral clarity, civic responsibility, and the spiritual welfare of our communities.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today **in support of Senate Bill 175**.

At the heart of this legislation lies a principle both timeless and true: **the family is the foundational institution of faith and of society**. It is within the home that values are transmitted, faith is nurtured, and the architecture of moral character is built.

In more than three decades of pastoral service, I have seen this truth proven again and again when families are strong, communities thrive; but when families are weakened or ignored, society begins to unravel.

We now live in a digital age where influences once confined to the public square enter our homes uninvited—through the glowing screens our children hold in their hands. Technology, though extraordinary in its potential for learning and connection, has also become a conduit for manipulation, exploitation, and moral confusion. The line between **information and indoctrination**, between **empowerment and exploitation**, grows thinner with each passing day.

**Senate Bill 175** does not seek to ban technology or to resist innovation. Rather, it seeks to **restore balance and moral order** by reaffirming the **primacy of parental authority** in guiding the moral and intellectual development of children. By equipping parents with the tools to determine what their children can access online, this bill recognizes a truth affirmed by both faith and social science: the first educators and protectors of children are not corporations, nor the state, but **parents**.

Moreover, the bill calls upon technology companies to **exercise ethical stewardship proportionate to their technological power**. If these corporations can track every click, analyze every preference, and monetize every moment of attention, then surely they also possess the capacity and indeed, the moral obligation to protect the innocence and dignity of minors. **Economic freedom must never become an excuse for ethical negligence**. Freedom in commerce must be governed by conscience.

From a theological standpoint, this matter transcends public policy. It speaks to the sacred covenant between **parent and child, community and Creator**. Every child bears the *imago Dei*, the image of God and therefore deserves a digital environment that preserves, not distorts, their divine worth. Parents have both the right and the duty to cultivate that moral landscape. When legislation strengthens that right, it not only serves the public good it honors divine order.

In supporting Senate Bill 175, this Committee would affirm a **threefold commitment**:

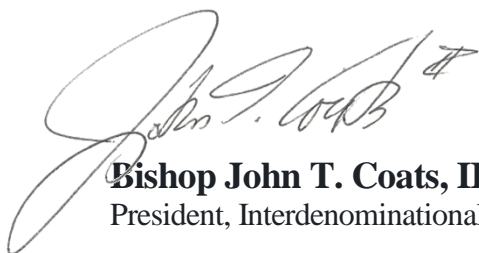
1. **To the moral agency of parents** as the first and most effective guardians of their children's well-being;
2. **To the accountability of corporations** whose influence now reaches deeper into family life than ever before; and
3. **To a principled role for government**, one that empowers families rather than encroaches upon them.

As faith leaders, we recognize that technology is here to stay. Yet our moral responsibility is to ensure that **technology serves humanity, not the other way around**. This bill provides a wise and necessary framework for aligning innovation with integrity, and access with accountability.

**Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee**, I urge you to view Senate Bill 175 not merely as sound public policy, but as an act of moral leadership. It proclaims that in Ohio, **we trust families to raise their children, we expect corporations to act with conscience, and we invite government to support not supplant the moral structure of the home**.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to the people of this great state. May divine wisdom guide your deliberations and grant you discernment as you act on behalf of Ohio's families and children.

**Respectfully submitted,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John T. Coats, II", with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Bishop John T. Coats, II**

President, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Columbus and Vicinity