



Representative Adam Mathews
56th House District

House Civil Justice Committee
Sponsor Testimony – H.B. 557
June 4, 2024

Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and fellow members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 557. This simple and straightforward bill would protect the privacy of Ohio’s students by granting school boards the permissive authority to withhold student directory information from public release.

Student directory information is defined in ORC Section 3319.321 and includes a student’s name, address, phone number, birth date, major field of student, participation in sports and extracurricular activities, weight and height, dates of attendance, date of graduation, and awards received. Under current law, this information is classified as a public record and can be requested by members of the public – even for non-academic reasons, and even by anonymous requesters.

Current law allows parents or guardians of students under eighteen and students over eighteen to request the board of education withhold their directory information from release; however, current law also creates unnecessary ambiguity on whether a school board can otherwise withhold such information from requests that may not be in the best interests of students.

House Bill 557 declassifies student directory information as a public record and explicitly states that school boards may choose to not release any student’s directory information. If a school board chooses to continue to release directory information, the bill requires any restrictions imposed on any type of requester be imposed uniformly, in line with current law. These provisions are entirely permissive, and school boards will continue to be able to release student information to employers, businesses, and colleges and universities in line with the best interests of their students. Furthermore, the bill preserves the existing requirement that schools must release names and addresses of students to military recruiters upon request unless a student or their parent or guardian elects to withhold it.

School board members work closely alongside their community members and constituent schools to advance the best interests of their students. This bill grants them the permissive authority necessary to protect the privacy of their students and eliminate unnecessary confusion over which records are subject to release.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome any questions you have.