

Sherri Eppley  
Homeschool Parent  
Interested Party, Testimony HB602  
June 21, 2024

### Ohio House Bill 602 – HB602 – Proponent Testimony

Representatives Fowler Arthur, McClain, Barhorst, Claggett, Click, Dean, Ferguson, Gross, Holmes, John, Johnson, Kick, Klopfenstein, Lear, Stein, Stoltzfus, Swearingen, Wiggam, Williams, and Willis, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of House Bill 602. My name is Sherri Eppley, and I am a homeschool mom.

I am here today to seek not only clarification but also to provide for least restrictive laws, policies, and/or procedures for all home education groups such as co-ops or learning pods to make them easier to run and more accessible to all homeschool children. My own children have really enjoyed their homeschool co-op. I have seen the benefits of them being able to socialize with the same group of peers on a regular basis. They have built friendships in an environment that offers both independence and opportunities to work together and solve problems.

I support this bill as it can clarify the laws surrounding home education groups, which would make it easier to run these groups and make them more accessible for homeschool children to attend. Co-ops or home education groups are not the same as daycares and thus should not have the same set of rules forced upon them. It was very frustrating earlier this year when the co-op my children attended was threatened and harassed with the possibility of having to shut down because they were allegedly not following daycare procedures when it was not even a daycare. This bill could prevent this from happening again and prevent any other home education groups from having to endure that.

I do recommend some changes to the new law to make the laws surrounding home education groups less restrictive which would make them more available and inclusive to all. First, I do not find it necessary to require “at least one parent of any of the children participating in the pod must be on the premises while the pod is meeting”. If the leaders or at least 2 trusted adults are always present, then that should be sufficient given that all parents or caregivers agree. The leaders of the pod should be more than capable of meeting the needs of the children. Caregivers may opt to stay but I do not think it should be required. It should be noted that not all children have a parent available to accompany them. Parents may be ill, working or just busy at times. From my experience, we would often have one family bring another family’s children to help them out when they needed a ride, or when someone was sick or busy. It’s great to see families within the co-op helping and supporting each other.

Furthermore, not all children live with a parent or are supervised during the day by a parent. Their daily caregiver may be a foster parent, grandparent, other relative, neighbor, friend, etc. Therefore, I would recommend that the wording of “parent” be changed to “parent or caregiver” to include these children and unique situations that may arise.

In conclusion, HB602 if passed can greatly benefit homeschool children by making home education groups more accessible to them and allow them to function as they were originally intended. Thank you for your time and careful consideration.

Sherri Eppley

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S Eppley", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.