

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Kelly Cloonan, and I am a parent, educator, and advocate for home education in Ohio. I am writing to express my strong support for HB602, which seeks to exclude home school co-ops and learning pods from the regulations governing daycare centers as outlined in RC 5104.01(V).

As defined in the bill, a "learning pod" is a voluntary association of parents who direct their children's education through home education, characterized by:

- Parents choosing to group their children together in a home or other location at various times, which may include hours when home education is not provided;
- Including only the parents' children, siblings, or other children under the care of the parents, regardless of age;
- At least one parent of any child being on the premises while the learning pod meets.

#### Key Points of Support

1. **Preservation of Educational Freedom:** Learning pods and home school co-ops embody the essence of educational freedom, allowing parents to tailor their children's learning experiences to meet individual needs and preferences. HB602 recognizes and supports this autonomy by ensuring these groups are not encumbered by regulations intended for commercial daycare centers, which operate under a fundamentally different premise and set of requirements.

2. **Parental Involvement:** The active involvement of parents in learning pods is a core feature that distinguishes these groups from traditional daycare centers. In learning pods, parents are directly engaged in the educational process, providing oversight, instruction, and support. This high level of parental involvement ensures a safe and nurturing environment tailored to the unique needs of each child, making the stringent regulations of daycare centers unnecessary.

3. **Community Building and Socialization:** Learning pods foster a strong sense of community among participating families. They provide opportunities for children to interact with peers in a controlled and familiar environment, promoting socialization and cooperative learning. Exempting these groups from daycare regulations allows them to flourish, offering diverse and enriching educational experiences without the burden of inappropriate regulatory constraints.

4. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** The flexibility of learning pods allows for innovative educational approaches and adaptive learning schedules that meet the needs of both children and parents. Imposing daycare regulations on these groups would limit their flexibility and responsiveness, undermining one of the primary benefits of home education. HB602 rightly acknowledges this by providing the necessary exemption.

5. **Support for Parental Choice:** By passing HB602, the state of Ohio will be affirming its

commitment to supporting parental choice in education. This bill empowers parents to make decisions that are in the best interest of their children's educational and developmental needs, free from undue governmental interference.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the members of the committee to support HB602. This bill provides a much-needed clarification and exemption for learning pods and home school co-ops, ensuring that parents who choose to direct their children's education through these means can do so without unnecessary regulatory burdens. By supporting HB602, we are upholding the principles of educational freedom, parental involvement, and community-based learning.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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