



OHIO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NETWORK

A Network of Center for Christian Virtue

Good Morning Chair Mathews, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Public Health Policy Committee,

I'm Corrinne Vidales and I serve as Legal Counsel for the Ohio Christian Education Network, a network of over 170 Catholic and Evangelical schools in Ohio. However, the Ohio Christian Education Network, is more than just an advocate for our member schools, we are also an advocate for Educational Freedom and Parental Rights which HB 602 furthers and I would encourage you to pass.

HB 602 is a bill designed to codify something we already see in practice every day. It's not changing anything about how many families already function but clarifying an area that has recently been called into question and since the COVID pandemic has seen growth as an educational option- home education families gathering together in a shared space to engage and learn with one another.

This bill promotes Educational Freedom by defining a home education learning pod in law bringing validity to the educational option of home educating in all its different facets including group settings like local museums, churches, parks, libraries, or any other setting.

This bill also promotes Parental Rights by trusting parents' decisions about how they educate their children. Homeschool co-ops and learning pods are common and a great way for home education families to engage with their community and for students to socialize and learn together. Home Education parents have already taken the necessary measures to abide by state home education standards and in many ways, these students often exceed expectations. There's no reason to subject families to additional regulation or scrutiny, and certainly not to lawsuits for choosing to educate their children in a group learning pod setting.

There is one point in HB 602 that I would encourage the committee and the sponsors to consider revising. Part (3) of the definition, "At least one parent of any of the children participating in the pod must be on the premises while the pod is meeting" I think this section could be read as *each* child needing one parent in attendance, or as *all* children needing just one adult to supervise *all* of them. A clarification in the language may strengthen the bill and prevent ambiguity.

As seen in O.R.C. section 5104.02 there are many groups and organizations that are already exceptions to daycare regulations and this bill simply adds home education learning pods to their number. Some of the others are park district programs,



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Vacation Bible School type programs, and sports camps. We would not expect any of these to comply with stringent daycare regulations and a learning pod is similar.

Passing HB 602 would show a commitment to parents and families in their choice to direct the education of their children and I urge a yes vote.