

To: sponsoring Delegate Atterbeary and the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee

Oppose HB 119: County Boards of Education – Curriculum Guides and Course of Study Requirements

Dear Delegate and Senators:

My name is Jim Thomas. I'm the proud dad of three kids--two boys, 10 and 8, and a little girl, just turned 3. We live in Baltimore County.

It's hard to understand how we in Maryland have come to a place where some feel it advisable or necessary to mandate central authority and control over the choices of localities when it comes to raising and educating their children.

Children.

How can this be right? In theory—and in the ideal—the United States rests upon principles like liberalism and plurality. This means we rely on our right to disagree with each other peacefully. To hold different views and, yes, even deeply held systems of belief, and still be neighbors. Still exchange friendly greetings over the fence. To wave coming in and going out of our communities. We respect each other, and we respectfully disagree.

In community spaces, we come together—school boards may be the best example—to argue our cases to each other when group consensus is needed to move forward, to make policy. We vote for local people to represent our viewpoints. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose, but at core there is the trust that our right to disagree and to advocate will be respected.

Locally, this is manageable. Locally, there can be some degree of accountability, and a sense that our voices can be heard, even when our voices are not ascendant. What is to become of that trust—of that bedrock faith of American to American—if a centralized authority, beholden to no one who voters can see and affect, supplants that process and takes it into and upon itself?

This is a grave mistake. The imposition of policy by centralized power, while seductive, must be eschewed. Oppression remains oppression, no matter which team holds the gavel. We live in horrendously fractured times, and it seems only to get worse. Our chance, the chance of our nation, is to protect citizens' right to govern themselves through direct engagement on the local level, *especially* where their children are involved.

Please. Please consider and recommend whatever steps will afford local school boards the opportunity to make choices that reflect the consensus views of their community.

Best

Jim Thomas, Perry Hall