

Written Testimony of Thomas P. and Tina M. Wilson

RE: In Opposition to Senate Bill SB0199 - Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established

February 7, 2023

As citizens of the state of Maryland, we oppose Maryland **Senate Bill SB0199** as currently drafted. This testimony seeks to express our concerns around **SB0199** and offer suggested changes to the language of the bill.

This bill gives the State Dept. of Education control of educating students in topics that should have some level of parental control. While the regulations are to be generated by each county Board of Education, they must meet the State requirements. On the surface, this has the appearance of local control, but the reality appears to be that this is controlled by the State.

Parents will be allowed to “opt out” under unspecified conditions but they should have the decision to “opt in”. Parental control of sensitive issues is being taken away.

We find the language in the paragraph 5 below to be vague in terms of “opting out”.

“(5) (I) SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPHS (II) AND (III) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL ESTABLISH POLICIES, GUIDELINES, AND PROCEDURES FOR A PARENT OR GUARDIAN TO OPT OUT OF THE FAMILY LIFE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY OR THE GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION TOPICS FOR THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN’S STUDENT IN EACH GRADE IN WHICH THOSE TOPICS ARE TAUGHT.”

We suggest that line #10, page 3, be modified to reflect the following:

“HUMAN SEXUALITY **AND/OR** THE GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION TOPICS”

We also find paragraph below to be vague as to the possible outcomes of “alternative learning objectives”. It is unclear if the “alternative learning objectives” will be developed and reviewed by a similar body as identified in paragraph 4(II). We recommend some language be added to cover the governance process for “alternative learning objectives” including parents’ ability to concur with the “alternative learning objectives”.

(III) EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE 16 ALTERNATIVE LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND MEASURABLE GOALS THAT MEET STATE 17 AND LOCAL HEALTH EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR A STUDENT WHOSE PARENT 18 OR GUARDIAN HAS ELECTED TO OPT THE STUDENT OUT OF A PARTICULAR TOPIC 19 UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH.

These modifications address both curriculum topics that may be most objectionable to parents and allows parents to make appropriate decisions for their children based on their individual

needs and beliefs. Without these modifications, we are compelled to express our opposition to this bill. Thank you for your consideration.