

TESTIMONY against BILL HB0553 (SB0438) - UFAVORABLE

Family Law - Fundamental Parental Rights

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee

Chair Smith, Vice Chair, and Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Wendy Novak, Carroll County, Maryland

February 13, 2024

I'm the mother of 3 children. I am a Christian, I have taught Sunday School for over 20 years, volunteering with many groups within my church, such as Vacation Bible School. In my role as a parent, or as a Christian leader, it is my job to guide children to adulthood. In my volunteering as a Girl Scout leader, we use the phrase "Girl led." My role as a leader is to support the girl scouts, allowing them to step up, as age appropriate, and take ownership of their decisions, which allows them to grow into confident leaders who can make informed and empowered decisions. Children should be given the autonomy to determine their own identity and figure out their own path in life with the help of their parents, not with the parents telling them who they are, and what they will be.

On the surface, Fundamental Parental Rights sounds like a good thing, but it is the intention behind it that is troubling. Parents Rights is not about a parent's right to support their child, which would include affirming their identity, it is about the opposite. The objective is to erase our LGBTQIA+ children, with no recognition our LGBTQIA+ children exist. The Parent Rights groups want to block efforts to be inclusive. To them, their right to keep their child from knowing our LGBTQIA+ children exist is more important than our children. They want to ban representation of families other than ones with a 1 mom and 1 dad. They do not want to teach the negative parts of our history.

This bill puts parent rights above children. This bill would force the courts to consider parent's rights above what is best for the child. This bill would open the possibility that a parent would have the right to determine curriculum, attendance requirements, discipline, grading, and reporting requirements. Parents already have the right to direct the upbringing, education, care, and welfare of their own child; they do not have the right to determine what is appropriate for their child. This bill is unnecessary and will only serve to further prevent all members of the community from being included and supported.

Please vote unfavorable on HB0553 (SB0438)

Wendy Novak,

Carroll County, Maryland