

**Bill:** HB1430 Public Schools - Parents' Rights (Education Bill of Rights for Families Act)

**Submitted by:** Michele Schlehofer, Board Member

**Position:** UNFAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony **OPPOSING HB1430** (the “Education Bill of Rights for Families Act”) on behalf of GLSEN Maryland, the statewide chapter of GLSEN National, a nonprofit organization centered on creating and sustaining inclusive K-12 education for LGBTQ+ students. Not only is HB1430 unnecessary, the bill has the potential to undermine Maryland State Department of Education standards for K-12 education and to create a chilling environment in the classroom.

**This bill is unnecessary** as there are currently many opportunities for parents to know the lesson plans and resources their children’s teachers use, available opportunities for school enrollment or school choice options, and educational options available to students such as dual enrollment and gifted and talented programs. School districts use websites, social media pages, apps, emails, phone calls, and paperwork sent home with students or via postal mail to notify parents of rights and opportunities. And, most Maryland public school districts use Schoology, Google Classroom, or other web-based programs on which the teachers post their lessons, books, and videos used in the classrooms. This became even more effective during the years of remote learning. Parents also have opportunities to meet directly in-person with their students’ teachers at family conferences scheduled multiple times over the year.

GLSEN Maryland is concerned that HB1430 is a broadly written “freedom to censor” bill which encourages parents to select which components of the MDSE family life and human sexuality, comprehensive sexual education, and HIV prevention framework they want taught to their children. The bill encourages parents to unilaterally reject broad swaths of MDSE curricula. As such, **HB1430 undermines Maryland State Department of Education standards and undermines teacher’s freedom to teach.**

Children thrive in the classroom when parents and teachers work together to support their learning. However, **HB1430 undermines parent-teacher educational partnerships** by promoting parental involvement in a way that **undermines teacher’s training, expertise, and authority in the classroom.**

Educational content pertaining to sex, gender, and/or race is particularly likely to be that which parents attempt to censor under the guise of “parental rights.” All children deserve access to comprehensive, robust, and accurate educational curricula. Teaching about these topics sharpens young minds and enhances critical thinking skills. As HB1430 provides parents with broad opportunity to undermine their child’s education under the guise of parental authority, this bill is **potentially detrimental to children’s education.**

The language of the bill is likely to have a **chilling effect on educational content around sex, gender, and/or race**, creating situations where teachers fear parental backlash for teaching core educational content. Democracy requires freedom of thought, expression, and inquiry, all of which this bill undermines by providing parents with broad “freedom to censor.” Research on the impact of similar broad bills (such as Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” bill) have found that this type of legislation has an

immediate chilling effect, reducing teacher's support of marginalized students (Equality Florida, 2022). Research has also linked these types of broad censorship bills to an increase in targeted harassment of LGBTQ+ students and their families (Goldberg, 2023).

Given the broad, vague nature of the bill, the potential for the bill to undermine MDSE educational standards, the chilling effect HB1430 will have on classroom instruction, and that the bill replicates the existing access parents have to school materials and educational opportunities, GLSEN Maryland opposes HB1430 and requests an **UNFAVORABLE** vote in committee.