

Jan 27th, 2025,

Re: oppose Bill HB0161

As a parent of 2 elementary school-age children in Howard county schools, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Bill HB0161, which forbids local BOE to grant parents to opt their children out of classes gender and sexual orientation classes, even when such content conflicts with their personal values or beliefs. While I fully support fostering an inclusive and respectful environment for all students, I believe this policy undermines fundamental parental rights and does not account for the diversity of family values within our community.

First and foremost, parents play an essential role in guiding their children's education, particularly on sensitive topics such as sexual orientation and personal values. Policies that deny parents the right to make decisions about their child's exposure to these subjects not only infringe on their fundamental rights but also disregard the trust and collaboration necessary between schools and families. Education is most effective when it respects the diverse cultural, religious, and moral perspectives of the families it serves.

Moreover, forcing participation in such classes risks alienating families who feel their deeply held beliefs are being ignored or invalidated. This could erode trust in the educational system and create unnecessary tension between parents and schools. By allowing an opt-out provision, schools can uphold principles of inclusivity while also respecting the plurality of beliefs in our society.

Importantly, respecting parental choice does not detract from the school's ability to provide education on sexual orientation to those who choose to participate. Inclusive education can coexist with policies that honor individual family preferences. Offering alternative activities or assignments for students who opt out ensures that no child feels excluded or penalized while still maintaining the integrity of the curriculum for others.

I urge you to reconsider this policy and incorporate provisions that allow parents to opt their children out of classes addressing sexual orientation when it conflicts with their values or beliefs. Such an approach will demonstrate a commitment to respecting diversity in its fullest sense—not only diversity of identities but also diversity of thought, faith, and culture.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further and collaborate on solutions that support both inclusivity and parental rights.

Sincerely,

Yun Xing

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