

Witness: Katherine Strauch Sullivan
Jurisdiction: Baltimore County
Bill: SB566 Family Law- Fundamental Parental Rights
Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Committee,

I am writing in support of SB566.

SB566 places into Maryland law what, up until just a few short years ago, was common sense to most parents. This bill will unequivocally clarify parent/guardian right to direct the moral and/or religious upbringing, medical care and health decisions, and informed consent issues of their minor children.

The role of the parent/guardian should be central not ancillary. Parents should have the final say in all important decisions with regard to their minor children, except where there is provable, legally argued harm.

Throughout this legislative session, I have heard countless people ask, “why do we need this Bill?”. “Parental rights are already guaranteed in Maryland” or “our Constitution already protects parental rights”. Sadly, these people seem to have conveniently forgotten the past two years. I thought back on the countless parents who knew, for example, masks were harming their children, plexiglass dividers were impeding their ability to concentrate, social distancing was deeply impacting their mental well-being, and senseless “contact tracing” protocols were keeping our healthy children out of school. How many in this room heard over and over again, “my hands are tied”, “it’s protocol”, “it’s the decision from the state”. Principals, public health officials, and elected leaders made it very clear the government directives were far more important to them than the concerns of parents. Parents felt powerless against the Goliath government. Parents pleas were ignored because, frankly, there was no reason to listen to them. SB566 will give them a reason to listen in the future.

There is a millennium of evidence supporting the fact that the family unit is the most effective and ideal vessel for providing the nurturing and support so critical to human development. Fortunately, the Supreme Court agrees. In the Supreme Court Case, *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), the ruling held that “the fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the State to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.”

It is for these above reasons 26 states have already introduced Parental Rights bills similar to SB566 in their state legislature. Gloriously, 15 have signed them into law.

We hope Maryland will join with these forward thinking and common-sense leaders vote yes in support of HB666.

SB566 is necessary. Vote in support of SB566.

Sincerely,

Katherine Sullivan
Mother of 4 Maryland Public School Children
Baltimore County