

Good morning,

I am writing to ask for an unfavorable vote on HB558.

Local boards of education were elected by the citizens in each district to represent them, their interests, and their needs. Stripping power from local elected boards of education is antithetical to our republic system of government.

This framework presents very controversial topics, of which there is no consensus. Schools should be teaching the facts: reading, writing, math, science, history, arts, etc. Sexual education should focus on biology and reproduction. It should not include lessons teaching children gender ideology or explicit sexual acts.

In this framework, kindergarteners will be taught gender ideology - including the belief that there are more than two genders and a person can choose their children. Gender ideology is not fact – it is a *belief* of some, but not all. In seventh grade, 12 -year-olds will be taught about anal sex and solo sex.

These topics are not appropriate for schools to teach. Instead, they should be discussed by parents or guardians, at their discretion. Parents have the fundamental right to direct the upbringing, care, and education of their children. This bill also violates the religious beliefs and teaching of many religions. Why would the State of Maryland want to trample on families' religious beliefs?

Removing the option for parents to opt-out of the gender ideology and sexual orientation pieces of this framework is a deliberate attempt to seize the rights of parents to the upbringing, care, and education of their children. It is not the state's job to override a families' moral and religious beliefs.

Forcing these topics on children, stripping power from local school boards, taking away the fundamental rights of parents to the care, upbringing and education of their children, and violating the religious beliefs of a huge number of Marylanders is a slap in the face to the American system of government, our Constitution, and parental rights.

When asked about what public schools should be doing to support and education LGBTQ students, Gov Moore stated "...we don't dictate to the local jurisdictions as to how their educational processes work...". This bill does exactly what Gov said the state is not doing.

The focus of the MSDE and the legislature should be to serve the best interests of our children - provide them with safe schools that focus on academics where they can learn and thrive. Our children deserve nothing less.

Thank you,

Melissa Idleman

