

RE: HB 161

POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

Dear Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

I strongly oppose Maryland House Bill 161, Primary and Secondary Education—Comprehensive Health Education Framework. This legislation, sponsored by Delegates Vanessa Atterbeary and Kris Fair, represents an alarming overreach by the state, eroding parental rights, trampling local authority, and undermining religious freedom.

HB 161 severely limits parents' ability to opt their children out of controversial instruction on gender identity and sexual orientation. By restricting opt-out provisions to only the Family Life and Human Sexuality domain, the bill effectively sidelines families from critical decisions about their children's exposure to sensitive topics. This not only disregards parental authority but also threatens the religious beliefs and values of many public school families.

The bill's apparent intent is to impose divisive ideological concepts on all Maryland public school students, starting as early as pre-kindergarten. Such a mandate overrides the rightful role of parents and local communities in shaping educational content that reflects their values and needs. By centralizing control over health education curricula, HB 161 strips away local autonomy and replaces it with a one-size-fits-all approach dictated by the state.

For these reasons—its assault on parental rights, its disregard for local authority, and its threat to religious freedom—I urge you to oppose HB 161.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Laura Wade

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