

# HENNEPIN COUNTY

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 25, 2025

Chair Bennett  
House Education Policy Committee  
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

We write to share serious concerns about HF 22 (the Parent's Bill of Rights). While we share the belief that parents should have appropriate decision-making over their children's lives, the bill as written is overly broad and vague, creating potential confusion and litigation for counties that are providing appropriate and needed services to children and families.

HF 22 would create a new, unclear standard that could impact a wide range of areas where counties interact with children and families. The bill states that the state or "***any other governmental entity or institution shall not infringe on the fundamental rights of a parent to direct the upbringing, well-being, education, and physical and mental health care of the parent's minor child without demonstrating that the potential infringement of parental rights is reasonable and necessary to achieve a compelling state interest, and that the potential infringement of parental rights is narrowly tailored and is not otherwise served by a less restrictive means.***"

Our questions about the current bill language include the following:

- HF 22 would amend 260C, which are the juvenile protection provisions of the Juvenile Court Act. Would these expanded parental rights apply only to the provisions of Section 260C?
- Section 260C states that the "paramount consideration in all juvenile protection proceedings is the health, safety, and best interests of the child." How would this bill impact this primary purpose of the juvenile protection provisions in law?

- How would the parental right provisions of this bill change current county processes for a child who is eligible for protective services?
- What are some examples of a situation that would qualify as a “compelling state interest” under the bill? For example, what levels of child neglect or abuse would qualify as a “compelling state interest” in which intervention by a governmental entity is protected?
- What happens when two parents have different opinions related to the best interest of the child in situations of child protection, health care decision making or other areas addressed by the bill?

The broad and vague standard established in HF 22 could significantly interfere with our statutory obligation to meet the needs of both children and parents. We would urge committee members to oppose this legislation given its potential to undermine important protections and services for children and families in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Irene Fernando". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Irene Fernando

February 25, 2025

Representative Peggy Bennett  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

I write today on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Health in opposition to House File 22. This bill conflicts with established Minnesota laws that allow minors to consent to critical healthcare services, including mental health care, substance use treatment, select immunizations, and emergency treatment. Removing legal protections that allow minors in vulnerable situations to access care puts children and young adults at risk and conflicts with current public health and best practices.

This bill creates confusion among providers whose medical oaths and training require that they provide care in accord with Best Practices. Best Practices require adolescent confidentiality to enable youth to feel comfortable discussing sensitive health issues with their providers. As a result of this bill, teen and school-based health clinics would reduce services such as mental health counseling for those 16 and older, substance use counseling and referrals for treatment, and STI testing and treatment. This could also prevent young people from seeking and receiving timely health care.

When minors don't have confidentiality protections while speaking with providers, like a school nurse, it can lead to delayed or denied access to care during crisis. It can also lead to a minor not being fully honest with their providers for fear of a parent's reaction. This is especially important when minors are experiencing abuse or neglect, have questions about their sexual or reproductive health, mental health, or substance use.

Research on adolescent consent and confidentiality show that these practices protect the health of the young person, promote positive health behaviors and outcomes, avoid negative health outcomes, encourage young people to seek needed care, and increase communication with health care providers – all of which protects our public health.

When minors can't act on their own behalf, they have decreased engagement with health care which can lead to increased health problems including mental health concerns and missed time in school. This is especially important for youth that face barriers to care for sensitive health issues such as struggles with eating disorders, mental health, and safe and healthy relationships.

I appreciate this opportunity to share our concerns with House File 22. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions or for further discussion.

Sincerely,



Wendy Underwood, Deputy Commissioner  
Minnesota Department of Health

To whom it may concern,

I was recently notified that HF22 will be heard in the House Education Policy Committee on Wednesday at 3:00PM. I would like to take a moment to share our personal journey these past several years as a homeschool family and why parental rights are essential in being able to make this decision for our family.

I had always wanted to homeschool seeing my cousins be homeschooled as I grew up.

I was nervous and excited when we finally began homeschooling our three children in the '18-'19 school year. It followed a very challenging year of trying to get a diagnosis for our kindergartener at the time. Due to her chronic pain and constant upset stomach, she missed a lot of school, was always in the nurse's office when she was at school, or I was getting phone calls from the school that she was pale as a ghost/vomiting and needed to get picked up by me. It felt like we lived at the hospital and I was doing everything right, but it still wasn't enough. I had broken my foot during that same time and couldn't find much help within our community or through the public school. This was the big push that led us to making the decision to be able to accommodate her needs.

My husband is a Navy Veteran, and when we transitioned into civilian life, he decided to continue in public service and became a volunteer FireFighter/EMT in addition to owning his own business. With his extremely long hours, department shifts, and training, not only did I lack the proper support I felt I needed, the children also barely ever saw their dad. On a normal night, I felt like I only had a couple hours with them. Their dad was lucky to have a couple hours with them per week it seemed. We remembered the reason why we chose to get out of the Navy at this time. We didn't want to have to go through anymore deployments and be separated anymore. We needed to make a change, while still allowing my husband to enjoy his passion for public service.

When we made the decision to homeschool, the freedom to spend more time together as a family during unconventional times, like traveling to his shop to have lunch with him in the afternoons, made a world of difference. I was able to prioritize our scheduled needs better, the children grew happier very quickly with their behavior clearly reflected that, and my husband strengthened his bond with them, too. I know he felt more supported in a strong sense having that time together we didn't have before.

Even though it was a big transition, I can look back in retrospect with so much clarity truly knowing that this decision was the best thing we could have ever done. Not one family has the same dynamics as the next. We should not all have to fit into the same type of daily schedule as everyone else. Due to us having the parental right in making this decision for our children, everyone's needs (Physically, mentally, academically, ect.) are able to be accommodated and met. I am not racing against the clock or pushing against brick walls to help my family succeed in life anymore. We are setting our own pace and doing what is right for the individual with extreme care and attention to detail. I am thankful for this right and the opportunity to share what a blessing it has been in our life. Our children are thriving in so many ways I never could have imagined 7 years ago.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Sincerely, Tiffany Bathurst

My name is Rachel Ecker, and I am writing to you as a homeschooling mother of four. For the past four years, my husband and I have chosen to educate our children at home, a decision we consider one of the most beneficial we have made for our family.

Prior to 2020, we had two children enrolled in traditional schooling. However, we found that the traditional school environment did not align with their individual learning needs. The subsequent loss of a family member in 2020 further complicated their school experience, prompting us to bring them home. This transition allowed us to navigate a challenging period together and provided invaluable emotional support.

Now, as we enter our fourth year of homeschooling, our children are flourishing academically and personally. One of our children benefits significantly from the individualized attention inherent in homeschooling. We are also deeply grateful for the increased family time afforded by my husband's ability to work remotely.

The opportunity to actively participate in our children's formative years is something we cherish immensely. Being able to guide their learning, from foundational skills to advanced concepts, is a privilege we deeply value. We firmly believe that parents should have the autonomy to determine the educational path that best suits their children and their family. For the Ecker family, homeschooling has proven to be the most effective and fulfilling choice.

Furthermore, I believe that parental rights extend to all aspects of their children's well-being, including healthcare and upbringing.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these important matters.

Sincerely,

Rachel Ecker

**Written Testimony by Elizabeth Hanke**  
**House Education Policy Committee**  
**Wednesday, 2/26/2025, 3:00 PM**  
**Capitol G23**

**Re: HF22 (Gillman) – Parent's Bill of Rights**Written Testimony by Elizabeth Hanke

**House Education Policy Committee**  
**Wednesday, 2/26/2025, 3:00 PM**  
**Capitol G23**

**Re: HF22 (Gillman) – Parent's Bill of Rights**

Chairperson and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HF22, the Parent's Bill of Rights. My name is Elizabeth Hanke, and as a mother of three daughters and an active community member in Mankato, I have witnessed firsthand the powerful impact of parental involvement in education. This bill is vital for fostering a cooperative relationship between parents, educators, and schools, ensuring every child has the support they need to succeed.

#### **Personal Experience with Parental Involvement**

As a mother and student mentor, I've walked alongside my children through the highs and lows of their educational journeys. I've seen firsthand how open communication and genuine collaboration between parents and educators can transform a child's experience in school. Most parents want what's best for their children and need to feel like they are working in partnership with teachers, counselors, and staff. HF22 empowers parents to be engaged, informed allies in their children's education, fostering a supportive community that benefits everyone.

#### **Addressing Concerns of Overreach and Vagueness**

Opponents have expressed concerns that HF22 could interfere with educators' autonomy. In my experience, parental involvement enhances, rather than hinders, educational outcomes. This bill establishes clear and consistent guidelines, empowering parents to be informed partners without overstepping boundaries. When parents understand the curriculum and expectations, they can better support teachers, reinforcing learning at home. This cooperative approach benefits everyone involved—most importantly, the students.

#### **Balancing Student Privacy with Parental Oversight**

I understand the delicate balance between student privacy and parental oversight. As a parent who encourages open communication, HF22 strikes the right balance. It allows parents to be involved in significant aspects of their children's education and well-being while respecting student autonomy and confidentiality for sensitive matters. This balanced approach fosters trust, ensuring students feel supported by both their parents and educators.

#### **Efficient Use of Educational Resources**

Some argue that this bill could strain educational resources. However, clear guidelines and consistent communication reduce confusion and conflicts. I've seen situations where parents and

schools could have avoided misunderstandings with more transparent communication. HF22 streamlines this process, allowing educators to focus on teaching rather than resolving disputes.

### **Clarifying and Consolidating Existing Rights**

While some believe existing laws already protect parental rights, the reality is that the current system is inconsistent. Having navigated the educational system firsthand in Mankato, I know how confusing it can be for parents to understand their rights. HF22 provides clarity and consistency, ensuring that all parents, regardless of background or circumstance, have the same opportunity to be involved and informed.

### **Conclusion**

HF22 empowers parents to be active, informed participants in their children's education, supporting teachers and enhancing student success. When parents and educators work together, I believe this bill strengthens the partnership between families and schools by fostering transparency and collaboration.

As a mother, community member, and advocate for education, I wholeheartedly support HF22. I believe that when parents and educators work together, we can create the best possible learning environment for all children.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

**Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Hanke**

**Mankato MN 56001**

February 25, 2025

In regards to the Parent's Bill of Rights, HF22, I submit the following testimony:

This bill centers upon the very cornerstone of our society: the family, without which we have no society and no healthy citizens. The Supreme Court of the United States has determined that parents have a fundamental right to direct the care, custody, and control of their children. Children who are born to parents, or adopted by loving parents, can nurture, love, and know them better than anyone else. They hold the best interest of the child in high regard, higher than any others that are outside that nuclear family unit. The government or any other entity or governing body does not own the children of the citizens. Protecting this family unit and the legal rights of parents to guide and direct what is best for the children in education, medical, spiritual and emotional decisions should be of UTMOST importance. This bill seeks those ends. Please support HF22, the Minnesota House Parent's Bill of Rights.

Respectfully,

Kim Showcatally



I am submitting the following written testimony in support of HF22, a Parental Bill of Rights, to the Education Policy Committee in advance of their 2/26/25 committee meeting:

Families in every form have been the foundation of civilized society for all of recorded history. Parents are physically, emotionally, financially, and legally responsible for their children until they reach age 18; therefore, it is reasonable that those same parents have the right to make decisions for and stay informed of events that directly affect their children in those areas - up to the age of majority. To make them mutually exclusive weakens the family and fundamentally undermines that critical foundation.

I strongly encourage you to move HF22 forward.

Sincerely,

Kelly Kayser,

a non-partisan resident of Minnesota

**House File 22 Parent Bill of Rights**

**Testimony by Michael E. McCarthy**

**Stillwater, Minnesota**

**Before the House Education Policy Committee**

**February 26, 2025**

Parents have the primary responsibility for their child's care, education, and moral formation. The State does not. There are a few instances where the State is called upon to assist, but these rare exceptions that must not be used as an excuse to normalize such intervention. It is not the State's place to rescue children from the worldview, culture, and values of parents who do not conform to that which the State endorses. The State has no right to imbue in our children the progressive worldview that the world is divided into privileged oppressors and their victims.

It is wrong to teach children that by embracing one or more victim identities that they will obtain opportunity, resources, voice, and power over others – especially the right to take retribution against those they accuse of being “privileged”. Nor is it good or true to teach our children in segregated groups that progressives would use to teach their social constructs. Furthermore, it should not be taught that many children must willingly surrender that which is demanded of them in order to become “allies” of the self-declared victims.

In the twisted progressive worldview, social justice is achieved only when the resources, voice, opportunity, and power are redistributed sufficiently in the opinion of those reaping the bounty of the redistribution. This has been tried before in other societies, always ending in discord and disaster.

Teaching our children to aspire to such a world is damaging to their happiness, welfare, and future together as members of a functioning society. In fact, this teaching is antithetical to having a society that rewards merit or offers its members equal opportunity to prosperity.

We are the parents who believe in equality over false “equity,” merit over DEI, and education over indoctrination.

We are the parents who know that we are all human, men and woman, having equal value.

We must not be marginalized.

It is telling that we have reached such a place in America where the relationship between parents, their children, and the state must be clarified. Unfortunately, it is necessary.

Whose children are they? Their parents'. Trust the parents.

Enact Minnesota's Parent Bill of Rights.

Michael E. McCarthy

# PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. Why introduce a Parents' Bill of Rights?**

Until 2000, it was widely accepted that parents had the fundamental right to direct their children's upbringing and education. However, a divided Supreme Court ruling created uncertainty, allowing individual judges and states to interpret parental rights through the lens of the "best interests of the child." This led to inconsistent policies and shifting legal standards, leaving families vulnerable to uncertainty and government overreach. Minnesota families have been experiencing this for decades.

### **2. Does this bill impose new requirements on schools?**

No, the bill does not create new obligations for schools. It does not mandate a specific curriculum but reaffirms that parents have the final authority over their children's education.

### **3. If parents want authority over their children's education, shouldn't they homeschool or use private schools?**

The bill affirms the right to homeschool or choose private education. However, not all families can afford these options, making it essential for public schools to remain neutral and accepting of all family types.

### **4. Is there funding allocated for the bill's implementation?**

No additional funding is necessary. The bill merely affirms fundamental rights and provides policy guidance without requiring new expenditures.

### **5. Does the bill only apply to Child Protective Services (CPS) cases?**

No. House Research clarified that the bill applies broadly to all families, not just CPS cases.

### **6. Why is the bill placed in this specific section of the statutes?**

The bill's placement was not chosen by the families supporting it but may be due to its relevance to parental rights. The final placement is at the legislature's discretion.

### **7. Will the bill prevent schools from teaching non-academic topics like kindness or calling 911?**

No, the bill does not restrict teaching. It simply affirms the rights of parents to choose their children's education.

### **8. Does the term "parents" in the bill affect custody laws or decision-making authority?**

No. Minnesota law already defines custody and decision-making roles, and this bill does not alter those laws. Instead, it recognizes that a child may have more than one parent. Lines 3.12–14 address the court's role. While we do not believe this impacts existing custody laws, we are open to amendments to the language that specify "custodial parents" for clarity.

### **9. What is a "compelling state interest"?**

Attorney William Wagner explains that "compelling state interest" is a legal standard used by courts to determine when government intervention is justified, such as in cases of abuse.

### **10. Could this bill allow one parent to block investigations into abuse?**

No, the bill explicitly addresses this concern in lines 3.7-11.

**11. Does the bill grant parental rights both ways?**

Yes, parents have the right to accept or decline medical and educational decisions for their children. However, the accessibility of certain medical procedures remains subject to other laws and regulations.

**12. How does this bill impact newborn screenings?**

Minnesota law requires that newborn screenings be *offered*, but the decision is the parents'. The bill does not change this; it simply affirms parents' rights to make medical decisions for their children.

**13. Should there be a distinction between teenagers and younger children in decision-making?**

While teenagers should participate in decision-making, parents should also retain the right to make final choices. Parents are responsible for their children's well-being and should be informed about medical interventions.

**14. Will this bill remove children's rights or sexual education from schools?**

No, the bill does not restrict children's personal rights or remove any curriculum. It simply ensures that parents can review and opt-out of teachings that conflict with their culture or values.

**15. Who are the stakeholders in this bill?**

Stakeholders should include parents, families, and children—not just organizations or lobbyists. The bill aims to protect parental rights without affecting custody laws or shielding abuse.

**16. Are parental rights currently under threat?**

Yes. Recent testimony, legislation efforts and organizational actions demonstrate ongoing challenges to parental authority, including, but not limited to:

- Rep. Sencer-Mura testified in the last hearing on February 12, 2025, that “they “ are currently looking at making changes to current “opt out laws”.
- Changes to CPS definitions and ‘children in need of services’ laws, which now include children being denied medical gender altering services.
- The removal last year of the right to exemptions for daycare children.
- Bills introduced between 2019-2022 seeking to eliminate exemptions for all children.
- Prior legislation requiring doctors to sign off on conscientious (non-medical) exemptions.
- COVID-era mask and vaccine mandates affecting access to education, sports, disability services, and healthcare.
- Healthcare policies that lock parents out of medical decisions for their children starting at age 12, or even younger in some cases.

**17. Does this bill intersect with the PRO Act?**

The bill does not take a stance on abortion but affirms parents' rights to be involved in their children's medical decisions.

**18. Does this bill intersect with gender services?**

This bill does not take a position on gender services but affirms parents' rights to be involved in their children's medical decisions.

**19. What is the broader significance of this bill?**

This bill seeks to safeguard children from discrimination, exploitation, and abuse they may not yet recognize, while reinforcing parents' fundamental role in making decisions about their well-being and education.

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD | HF22 | PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES | EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2025, 3:00 PM

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Minnesotans for Health & Parental Rights has been a trusted community for over a decade, bringing together families, healthcare practitioners, legal professionals, educators, childcare providers, and business owners. What began as a grassroots support group grew into a broader movement as we encountered more families facing unexpected challenges.

As these needs grew, so did our mission. We began collaborating with like-minded organizations, including The Parental Rights Foundation, a national nonprofit dedicated to protecting parental rights. We both work to equip parents with the knowledge and connections they need to make informed decisions for their children. Whether it's providing resources for families navigating educational or healthcare decisions, helping them advocate in accessing services for disabled loved ones, supporting healthcare professionals and educators, or fostering open discussions, our goal remains the same: to strengthen communities by ensuring families have access to the information and support they need.

For generations, parental rights were considered a given—a fundamental principle guiding families and society. It was widely understood that parents are the most invested, best equipped, and most reasonable individuals to make decisions for their minor children, raising them according to their values and cultural traditions. This principle shaped legal and societal norms for centuries. However, in 2000, the Supreme Court's split decision in *Troxel v. Granville* opened the door for individual judges and states to apply their own interpretations of parental rights. This has led to inconsistency, confusion, and a lack of stability for families seeking to fulfill their role as the primary decision-makers in their children's lives. Our testimony today reflects the experiences of countless parents and professionals who have turned to us for help navigating these challenges. Many were invited to testify in person, but most were either unable to attend on short notice or too fearful of the potential consequences of sharing their stories publicly. In today's volatile political climate, families worry about being singled out or made an example of as states and the federal government begin to clash over authority in these matters. We appreciate the opportunity to share their voices and underscore the importance of strong families as the foundation of strong communities.

## **Real-World Experiences from Families Underscoring the Need for a Parents' Bill of Rights**

### **Parental Access to Medical Records & Treatment Decisions**

- Parents of a 12-year-old with profound autism have been denied access to their child's medical records due to company privacy policies, delaying necessary care for chronic conditions.
- Parents of an 8-year-old diagnosed with PANDAS (Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcal Infections) were similarly locked out of their child's medical records.
- Hundreds of families across Minnesota—including those using Fairview, Health Partners, Mayo, CentraCare, Gillette, Allina, Essentia, and Children's hospitals and clinics—have reported similar experiences.
- Parents have been forced out of exam rooms while their preteen or teenage children receive medical care, despite their objections.
- A local hospital refused to inform a single mother about her 14-year-old's treatment plan because the child did not want her involved—despite the fact that the child was hospitalized for refusing to take prescribed medications in the first place.

### **Threats & Consequences for Seeking Alternative or Informed Care**

- A South Metro family was subjected to a CPS investigation after taking their child to a chiropractor for complementary therapy to relieve pain from a medical condition. Despite chiropractic care being used alongside standard treatment, CPS continues to monitor the family.
- A local hospital refused to approve parent's requests to a transfer of care to another local hospital to obtain a second opinion on a condition (Mast Cell Activation Syndrome) because the doctor "did not believe in" it. The other local hospital had a specialist in the condition on staff willing to take direct responsibility for the transfer. The initial hospital threatened CPS if the parent's pursued it, so they were forced to stay and accept treatments that were not suited to the condition. The child *was* diagnosed with the condition by specialists post discharge.
- Numerous families have been denied organ transplants for refusing COVID-19, flu, or other vaccines.
- Several families were threatened with CPS intervention for declining the Hepatitis B vaccine at birth—despite the fact that Hepatitis B is primarily transmitted through sexual contact or shared needles.
- Pregnant mothers have reported experiencing harassment at OBGYN offices for declining flu, Tdap, and COVID vaccines during pregnancy. Some were repeatedly pressured with statements like, "if you get covid while pregnant it increases your risk for stillbirth" and "Just know, every time you come in here I'm going to bug you about it." While others were outright denied prenatal care.

- A family reported having a child with a rare autoimmune condition with few provider options. During Covid, the child was denied medical care by his specialist for not taking the covid vaccine- that wasn't even yet approved for his age bracket.
- Hundreds of families have been denied medical care at various clinics due to their personal medical decisions.
- Families have reported losing health insurance coverage for their trusted family practice clinics—not due to complaints or violations, but because the insurance company disapproved of the clinic's stance on respecting parental rights.

### **Education & Parental Rights in Schools**

- School districts have attempted to deny parents access to curriculum and have refused requests to opt their children out of content that does not align with their culture, faith or belief system.
- Schools have administered controversial surveys to students, even after parents explicitly opted out.
- A family with a special needs child was pressured and bullied by their public school when they decided to homeschool.

### **Parental Exclusion from Their Children's Mental Health & Well-being**

- A Minneapolis couple was denied the right to participate in family therapy with their 16-year-old. The clinic cited privacy concerns, even though the child had not requested confidentiality.
- Parents of a teenager struggling with anxiety, OCD, and focus issues were told their child had to personally consent to a neuropsychological evaluation before they could proceed.
- A psychologist denied parents access to information about what medications and dosages were prescribed to their teenager experiencing suicidal ideations.

A Parents' Bill of Rights would provide critical protection for families, ensuring their ability to make informed decisions without fear of government overreach or medical coercion.

We have also received feedback from both education and healthcare professionals who have expressed significant concerns about the growing challenges they face in balancing institutional policies with the rights of parents and families. Below are some of the key issues they have raised:

### **Concerns from Healthcare Professionals**

- **Unprofessional Conduct and Violations of Medical Ethics:** Providers report seeing an increase in unprofessional conduct by institutions, often in violation of American Medical Association (AMA) standards, leading to decreased trust in healthcare systems.

- **Lack of Accountability:** The Minnesota Medical Board's failure to enforce compliance with AMA standards has contributed to a loss of confidence among patients and healthcare professionals.
- **Limited Access to Care:** Families are increasingly avoiding certain hospitals due to concerns over institutional policies that do not align with patients' rights or medical ethics. They are also being denied care from numerous clinics and losing access to essential services.
- **Non-traditional Healthcare:** Many families are turning to alternative care paths because they feel their rights to informed consent and medical decision-making are being disregarded.
- **Undue Pressure on Parents:** Providers have observed cases where parental consent is bypassed or ignored in favor of institutional mandates, reducing parents' ability to make informed decisions about their children's health.

*A Parents' Bill of Rights* would provide clearer boundaries for healthcare professionals, ensuring that parents have the autonomy to make informed decisions without fear of overreach or discrimination.

### **Concerns from Educational Professionals**

- **Withholding Information from Parents:** Teachers report being instructed not to disclose certain discussions, lessons, or services provided to students, particularly on sensitive topics.
- **Limited Parental Involvement:** Schools require student consent—not parental—for mental health services, assessments, and disciplinary actions, excluding parents from key decisions.
- **Confusing Opt-Out Policies:** Inconsistent guidelines create frustration for both educators and parents trying to navigate curriculum exemptions and school surveys.
- **Overreaching Government Mandates:** Educators feel state and federal directives often override parental input, prioritizing compliance over student needs.
- **Parental Exclusion in Discipline:** Schools enforce suspensions and behavioral interventions without sufficient parental involvement, leaving educators in a difficult position.
- **Special Education Barriers:** Bureaucratic obstacles make it harder for parents to advocate for IEPs and accommodations, restricting collaboration between educators and families.

*A Parents' Bill of Rights* would provide clear guidelines to support educators in working transparently with families, ensuring parents remain actively involved in their children's education.



In conclusion, the experiences shared here highlight the urgent need for a *Parents' Bill of Rights* to provide clear, consistent protection for parents and families across Minnesota. As we've seen, the lack of this in current statutes leaves families vulnerable to confusion, discrimination, and unnecessary interventions by institutions. By ensuring that parental rights are firmly established and respected, we can foster stronger communities where families have the support and autonomy to make the best decisions for their children. A *Parents' Bill of Rights* will not only safeguard the role of parents but also help educators, healthcare providers, and other professionals navigate their responsibilities with confidence, ultimately benefiting everyone in Minnesota. Thank you for the opportunity to share these concerns and continue the conversation for a stronger, more supportive framework for families across our state.

Sincerely,

Minnesotans for Health & Parental Rights

ParentalRights.org | MN



My name is Steve Mitzuk. My wife and I experienced a loss of parental rights when our oldest child attended Woodbury High School in November 2021. She was 15 at the time. Our daughter and we believe a number of her friends were able to socially transition at school without parental consent. While we were given notice from the school, I know of one family where they didn't receive notice; everything changed in Schoology one day.

We were notified by the assistant principal and had a follow up conversation with the head principal regarding a name/gender/pronoun change in the school system our daughter requested. We responded to the head principal that we did not want our child to transition at school. We cited significant mental health issues we were navigating at the time and requested the school honor our space and request as a family to deal with this on our own terms. The principal informed us our consent was not needed and the change was staying (Our daughter changed her name twice because the first one was "cringe"). The principal ignored everything else I said. We didn't get to question why this was happening or where it would lead. It was a done deal. Up until that point we hadn't even the slightest clue our child was exploring a trans identity. Later we found some notes from friends talking about it with our daughter, plans to get chest binders and other things. There was even a text I saw to one friend complaining that "I found out [name of friend] did it too, this was my thing" referring to transitioning at school.

This event completely destroyed our trust in the public school system. My mother was a public school teacher for most of her career and I was a strong proponent of the institution. Because of this we pulled our other kids from the public school system. It's been a tremendous financial burden, we weren't expecting to pay for private school tuition. Ultimately we are happy we switched. We feel like we finally have a partner again in our children's education that will work with us and not undermine our parental authority or values.

From the reading I've done it has become apparent to experts that young teens saying they want to transition or experience gender dysphoria have a few things in common: they're on the autism spectrum, they have significant mental health issues, they have experienced trauma or a combination of all three. What I've noticed from observing my daughter's friends is;

- for some kids this is a way to stand out when they don't fit in at school because they're socially awkward (autism)
- mental health challenges keep them from having and maintaining friendships (personality disorder)
- one child found a sibling after an attempted suicide (trauma)

I'm only calling these out because how these kids are treated by the school matters. How families are treated by the school matters. None of what the school did to my family or other families fixed

our children. Most of my daughter's friends say they are bi-sexual, non-binary and date boys. This all seems to be at the least, an identity to fit in with a certain group and stand out, or at the extreme end a way to deal with significant issues in their lives they aren't equipped to deal with.

Parents know their kids best. The school wasn't sitting in our counseling sessions with therapists. If parents say 'no' to something it is for the child's good, the school shouldn't have the final word.

Regards,

Steve Mitzuk

February 24, 2025

Chair Peggy Bennett  
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

OutFront Minnesota, founded in 1987, is the state's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy organization. And we write today to oppose HF 22 (Gillman) as currently introduced.

OutFront Minnesota seeks to advocate for, and ally itself with those seeking to push for, the inclusion and protection of underrepresented communities in every space. Minnesota's educational facilities should be places for cooperative learning and collaboration. And, in keeping with that, schools should be a place where the rights of *all* students are protected and ensured. Understandably, parents have a say in the needs for their children, but not to the detriment of their identity, dignity, and wellbeing.

HF 22 seeks to target and discriminate against transgender students by enabling more restrictive educational policies that seek to exclude them or remove their identity altogether under the guise of parental rights. In doing so, this puts transgender students in unsafe and potentially violent environments as well as in a position of experiencing harassment and abuse from fellow students, staff, and administrators.

We recognize the need to continuously improve Minnesota's educational policies for *all* students; and we support good work to dig into these big problems. We encourage you to pursue approaches that seek those solutions while upholding the value and dignity of transgender students and their rights and protection in these environments.

OutFront Minnesota respectfully urges a NO vote on HF 22 as introduced, and urges further discussion around our state's approach to the educational system that seeks to support and include *all* of Minnesota's students.

Sincerely,

Kat Rohn  
Executive Director

Hello,

I am urging the Minnesota House of Representatives to vote in favor of the Parent's Bill of Rights, HF 22. Please honor and respect parental rights by upholding the rights and authority of parents to make educational and medical decisions for their children.

Sincerely,

John Quant

Apple Valley, MN

Hello!

I wanted to email to express my support for bill HF22. I am a homeschool parent of an 11 year old girl who deserves all the support and love her mother can give her. These days, parents are being pushed out of their child's lives in the name of privacy, and the kids are being influenced by agendas pushed onto them by others in schools, medical offices, and other such places. I, as a parent should not be worried about being pushed out of my child's life and influential sphere, and should retain parental rights and responsibilities.

I ask for your support for this piece of legislation bill HF22 in support of kids and their parents together in harmony. Thank-you!

Melissa Schanfield

I am urging the Minnesota House of Representatives to vote in favor of the Parent's Bill of Rights, HF 22. Please honor and respect parental rights by upholding the rights and authority of parents to make educational and medical decisions for their children.

Sincerely,

Karen & John Stiles

Apple Valley, MN

## **Support for H.F. 22 Parent's Bill of Rights**

### **MN House Committee on Education**

**Wednesday, February 26th, 2025**

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

I want to thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony.

My name is Anne Taylor. I am a wife, mother, educator, and firm believer in the protection of all children.

As we know wrap-around services in American schools have been expanding for years, and if parents are not paying attention, they may not realize how deeply these programs have infiltrated education—including private schools.

Under the Obama administration, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan pushed for “community schools” under the guise of providing support for low-income students. In reality, these programs go far beyond education, introducing government-controlled services that strip parents of their rightful authority.

The Center for American Progress describes community schools as a strategy, not a specific program, designed to integrate student supports. This includes medical and mental health services, food and housing assistance, and expanded learning opportunities. These are presented as necessary resources, but in practice, they invite government overreach into areas where schools have no business interfering.

Private schools have long accepted state and federal aid for textbooks, transportation, and counseling. But there are always strings attached. With the post-COVID push for expanded mental health services, schools—both public and private—are increasingly taking on roles that belong to parents. This is dangerous.

During a recent legislative hearing, we have been warned that wrap-around services blur the lines between education, healthcare, and government oversight. To quote the quote the Executive Director of Minnesota Parents Alliance “Adopting full-service community programs and dispensing mental health and physical health care during school hours invites conflicts, data privacy violations, and conflation of roles.”

The issue is not just theoretical. Parents who chose private education are now finding the same policies creeping into their institutions. Families struggling with job loss, addiction, mental



health, and poverty are being told that schools—not parents—should provide solutions. But history has shown that government-run social programs do not fix these problems; they create dependency and further erode parental rights.

Parents have the fundamental right to know who is controlling their child's information and how it is being safeguarded. We need to be cautious that control is not taken away from parents and the proposed bill supports just that.

Finally, our schools must return to their core mission, and parents must reclaim their role as the primary decision-makers for their children.

Respectfully,

Anne Taylor, S.D. 43B

February 25, 2025

Honorable members of the Capitol,

I stand before you today not only as a devoted mother but also as a licensed school counselor who has dedicated her career to advocating for children and families. The message I bring is simple, yet powerful: we must protect our children, respect their parents, and prioritize the values of truth, transparency, and integrity in our educational system.

There are some who would like us to ignore the uncomfortable truths and pretend that everything is fine. It is like the story of "The Emperor's New Clothes"—we can choose to buy into the narrative that everything is okay, but in doing so, we lose our children's hearts and souls. When we fail to stand up for our children, we fail them. When our children do not see us advocating for them, we are deceiving them.

I have always instructed my son and my students to stand for truth and integrity. These are the values that matter most in life, even when it is unpopular or comes at a great cost. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

With that in mind, I am here today to speak out for the parents who have been silenced and the children who are at risk. It is my duty to speak the truth, no matter the consequences. As a counselor and an advocate, I have always put the well-being of children first. However, I have witnessed firsthand the dangers of a system that seeks to silence those who speak out for the best interests of families.

I have personal experience with this. In my district, I was recently faced with an administrative guideline—issued under the guise of support for transgender and gender-expansive students—that directly violated my role as a parent and educator. This guideline stated that staff would only inform parents about their child's gender identity "if they request it." How are parents supposed to know what to ask if they are not even informed? How can they properly support their children if they are kept in the dark? This goes against the very principle that parents should have the right to be involved in all aspects of their child's education.

Unfortunately, when I raised concerns about this policy, my contract was publicly terminated at the end of the school year, and I was expelled from the Teachers Union. This happened after facing hostility, retaliation, and threats of disciplinary action. I was even warned that my job could be at risk if I continued to speak out. As a result, it seems I have been blacklisted, and despite my valiant efforts, I have had significant difficulty finding new employment. Nevertheless, I refuse to be silenced. Parents should never be censored, and neither should educators or counselors who stand up for what is right.

The fact is that we have a responsibility to ensure that students are protected from making life-altering decisions without fully understanding the long-term consequences. Children, especially those in their developmental years, are not equipped to make permanent decisions regarding their

gender identity. Their brains are still developing—particularly the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for judgment and reasoning—and they are more prone to impulsive, risky decisions.

This is why it is dangerous to impose gender-affirming practices on children who may not yet be emotionally or psychologically ready to understand these complex issues. Psychological studies like the "mere-exposure effect" show that repeated exposure to certain concepts can lead children to become more familiar with—and perhaps more accepting of—those ideas. But just because a child becomes familiar with something does not mean they are ready for it.

Furthermore, it is a grave mistake to exclude parents from these discussions. As mandated reporters, it is our duty to ensure the safety and well-being of every child. But we cannot do that if we are actively preventing parents from being involved in decisions that directly affect their children's lives. Federal law, including the 1st and 14th Amendments, FERPA, and the Pupil Protection Rights Act, affirms that parents have the ultimate authority over their children's upbringing and education. It is imperative that parents be notified about any sensitive issues, especially when it comes to mental health and matters of gender identity.

According to recent research, 75% of parents do not agree with policies that keep secrets from them or hide vital information about their children. Parents have a right to be informed and involved. When we erode that trust, we undermine the very foundation of our educational system.

Finally, we must ask ourselves: when did we allow the lines between right and wrong to become so blurred? When did we begin to prioritize policies that go against the rights of parents and children in favor of a political agenda?

Minnesota's national education ranking continues to fall. It is time to stop focusing on divisive issues and start focusing on what truly matters—providing a quality education and protecting the well-being of every student. Trust and transparency are essential for effective education. Parents deserve to be informed, and their rights must be upheld.

The stakes have never been higher. Together, we can create a system that works for children, supports parents, and ensures that every child's rights and well-being are prioritized.

Thank you.

Best,

*Christina L. Barton, M.S., LPSC*

Christina L. Barton, M.S., LPSC

We (my husband and I) received an email letting us know that there's a hearing this Wednesday, the 26th, at 3pm regarding HF22 Parent's Bill of Rights.

Although we are not able to attend this hearing in person at the Capitol, we do want to reach out to say how much we appreciate being able to have a say in how our children are educated, and to be the primary decision makers for our children's education.

We chose Home Education after we initially tried Private school options. The Home Education was a better decision for our children. Our children love school, they wake up excited to learn and being home to learn together. We have the ability to take field trips that fit our schedule, the freedom to learn at a pace that fits each child in their own special way (selecting what curriculum fits the family and each child best), allows for better relationships within the whole household, gives more opportunity to actually be a family, and allows for deeper connection with each child as they grow and learn and explore life.

Whether the education we choose for our children is in the form of: Charter, Public, Private or Home Education, we strongly believe it is ultimately the parents' decision.

But, not only the "form" in which our children receive education, but also "how" they receive it and what we believe is best for them. We strongly support letting parents have and continue to have that right. Thank you for helping reinforce this bill, and thanks for listening.

Melissa Wolfe, stay-at-home mom, primary educator and caretaker of our children

To the Chair and Committee members,

I am writing today in support of HF 22, the Parent's Bill of Rights.

As a society we need to encourage and empower parents to take on the responsibility of parenthood. Parents should know their children best and they know what works in their unique family dynamic. Health care, morality, and discipline all fall within the jurisdiction of parental responsibilities. Schools have enough to worry about in regards to scholastic education. If a parent chooses to enroll their child in public education it is a partnership between the school and the parent.

This bill would ensure parents have the responsibility to raise their children. All too often it seems like the expectation of raising children is being given over to the school district. This is breaking up the family unit. Studies have shown that the loss of the nuclear family has contributed to the breakdown of society as a whole. Please find ways to empower parents and keep the family unit strong. Thank you.

Sara Bertschinger

Pine Island, MN



# AMERICAN ATHEISTS

February 26, 2025

The Honorable Rep. Peggy Bennett  
Chair, House Education Policy Committee  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

**Re: OPPOSE HF 22, Undermining Students' Rights**

Dear Chairperson Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

American Atheists, on behalf of its constituents in Minnesota, writes in opposition to HF 22, a bill which would reduce the quality of education provided in Minnesota public schools and needlessly endanger vulnerable children. Under the pretext of a concern for “parents’ rights,” the bill would impose a host of draconian restrictions on teachers and school staff. We strongly urge you to reject this harmful bill.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the “wall of separation” between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheists are accepted as members of our nation’s communities and where bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building, and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. As advocates for nonsectarian public education, American Atheists supports students’ rights and opposes efforts to erode the quality of education they receive.

Too often, so-called “parents’ rights” bills subordinate the rights and well-being of all students to the personal religious beliefs of a vocal minority of parents. If passed, HF 22 would force teachers and counselors to disclose sensitive student information, even in cases where abuse is suspected, potentially endangering vulnerable youth. By granting parents broad receipt of all school records, including medical records, students whose parents or guardians are not supportive of their sexual orientation or gender identity would be put in harm’s way. Young people who are not protected from harassment, including by their own families, are more likely to suffer lifelong negative psychological consequences.

**AMERICAN ATHEISTS**

225 Cristiani Street • Cranford, NJ 07016-3214  
(908) 276-7300 • [www.atheists.org](http://www.atheists.org)

HF 22 would deny teachers, counselors, and other school professionals the ability to demonstrate any support for LGBTQ+ students in Minnesota's schools without risking disciplinary action or civil liability. For many at-risk children and teens, Minnesota's public schools and the professionals who work within them are a crucial safe space and a vital support network. Although parents should generally have the ability to access their child's medical records or weigh in on medical decisions, their rights should not supersede the safety and well-being of vulnerable children.

Minnesota's public schools are meant to be a "great equalizer," safe and welcoming learning environments where all students can receive a quality education. Lawmakers should not create an imbalance of power between parents' responsibilities to ensure the safety and well-being of their children and the fundamental rights of all students. We strongly urge you to reject this unnecessary and harmful bill.

Should you have any questions regarding American Atheists' opposition to HF 22, please contact me at [vanderson@atheists.org](mailto:vanderson@atheists.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and last name "Anderson" clearly legible.

Victoria Anderson  
State Policy Counsel  
American Atheists