



**MainStream Coalition**  
5960 Dearborn, #213  
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mainstreamcoalition.org

Testimony to House Committee on Education  
Chair, Rep. Steve Huebert  
Hearing: Thursday, February 21, 2019

### **Position – OPPOSE HB 2288**

Chairman Huebert, and Members of the Committee,

The MainStream Coalition strongly opposes HB 2288. MainStream was founded twenty-five years ago by legislators and clergy to protect the separation of church and state. The MainStream Coalition strongly supports religious individuals and communities. Throughout our history, we have maintained close ties with religious leaders, and we value their contributions. In no way do we wish to denigrate or deny the lawful expression of religious belief.

However, we have found that many well-meaning measures to provide for religious freedom fall short of the mark in one specific way: unintended consequences of attempting to protect particular beliefs or practices.

The freedom of religion enshrined in the U.S. Constitution is best understood, not only as the right to express one's religious beliefs, but more importantly as the freedom to be free of the rules of the religions of others imposed by government.

In the case of this bill, the MainStream Coalition objects to any of its provisions that might lead to a person or group imposing a particular religious belief on others, especially from any position of authority in a school setting. The bill contains a wide range of topics all of which are subject to nuance and factual differences. Such matters should generally be left to local officials to be decided based upon the values of that community.

In addition to addressing concerns best left to local officials, many of the provisions in this bill, as to the personal expression of religious beliefs in clothing, speech, or assembly, are already protected by the "free exercise" and "freedom of speech" clauses in the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and in existing Supreme Court decisions. That makes this bill largely unnecessary. MainStream submits that the bill is a solution in search of a problem.

Of particular concern to MainStream are the provisions of the bill relating to religious expression by teachers, administrators, and at "public comment"

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#### **About MainStream**

Founded in 1993, the MainStream Coalition is an advocacy group for moderate political views regardless of party. Our members do more than vote.

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periods. Such measures can easily be manipulated by the “adults in the room” to the detriment of students. These types of situations have been effectively addressed by local officials and will continue to arise even if this bill becomes law. Therefore, MainStream submits that this bill will have the unintended consequence of causing additional problems because of its wide reach.

MainStream defends the right of persons to exercise their own religious beliefs, but we will also defend the right of any person to not be forced to listen to another’s religious expression, or have any faith-based morality imposed upon them by government action.

We strongly urge the Committee to NOT pass this bill.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ed Peterson', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Ed Peterson  
President of the Board of Directors, MainStream Coalition