

February 14, 2015

House Education Committee:

I'm writing to ask that you support HB 2199. As a teacher and a parent of three sons, it is absolutely my responsibility to give them the information they need and teach them the morals that our family supports.

I am not alone in this. A January 2011 article *on U.S. News and World Report Health* (1) called "Parents Say They Want to Teach Sex Ed to Their Kids" delivered the facts of a study. "Researchers interviewed 1,605 parents of school-aged children in Minnesota and found that 98 percent said they should be responsible for their children's sex education..." The study appears online in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*. Because of such short notice, I did not have enough time to provide the study here, only the article that reported the study.

While I normally have plenty of my own opinions and have no problem expressing them, the problem, as I write this, is time. You see, it is Valentine's Day, and I have not seen my husband in a week. We have a dinner date planned with some friends and while this is a very noble cause that I am currently writing you about, I have to find a way to express myself quickly so that I can dress for the occasion at hand. So, I am going to leave it to the very capable hands of Robert P. George (a Georgetown University professor) and Melissa Moschella (a doctoral candidate in 2011). In an October 2011 article called "Does Sex Ed Undermine Parental Rights?" they write:

Liberals and conservatives alike should say no. Such policies violate parents' rights, whether they are Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist or of no religion at all. To see why, we need to think carefully about the parent-child relationship that gives rise to the duties that parental rights serve and protect.

Parents are responsible for bringing new people into the world, bound to them by blood and, ordinarily, deep feeling. These people are incapable of developing their uniquely human capacities on their own, giving parents an obligation to their children and to society to help them reach maturity — one that requires attending not only to children's physical and emotional needs, but their intellectual and moral growth as well.

Parenting, especially in moral and religious matters, is very important and highly personal: while parents enlist others' help in this task, the task is theirs. They are ultimately responsible for their children's intellectual

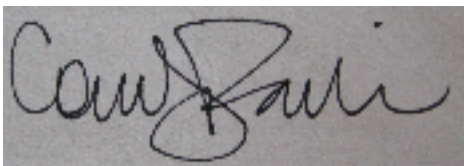
and moral maturity, so within broad limits they must be free to educate their children, especially on the deepest matters, as they judge best. This is why parental rights are so important: they provide a zone of sovereignty, a moral space to fulfill their obligations according to their consciences.

The right to parent is rather like the right to exercise one's religion. Like parental duties, religious duties are serious and highly personal. This is why, absent the most serious reasons, it would be a grave violation of individual rights if the state prevented people from honoring what they regarded as their religious obligations. To subject children to indoctrination in deeply personal matters against their parents' consciences is no less a violation than forcing Muslim parents to send their children to a Catholic Mass.

True, the state needs to protect children from abuse and neglect. It is also true that the state has a legitimate interest in reducing teenage pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. But it is not abuse or neglect to protect the innocence of preteenage children or to teach one's children more conservative, as opposed to more liberal, moral values. Nor is it wrong or unreasonable to limit the state's control over what one's children learn and think about sensitive issues of morality. On the contrary, that is just what is required if parents are to fulfill their duties and exercise their legitimate rights. (2)

You see, ladies and gentlemen, it is my right and my duty as a parent to determine what to present to my children, when to present it, how to present, and whom should be involved in the presentation. It is just that simple. If parents want to choose to have someone else do this for them, that is their right, but I have a right too, and it is my right to keep or defer or abdicate. I choose to keep it.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and please support HB 2199.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Courtney Rankin", written on a light-colored background.

Courtney Rankin
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End Notes

- (1) <http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/childrens-health/articles/2011/01/10/parents-say-they-want-to-teach-sex-ed-to-their-kids>
- (2) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/19/opinion/does-sex-ed-undermine-parental-rights.html?_r=0