

February 18, 2025

To: Montana House Judiciary Committee

From: Matthew Brower, Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 471

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower and I serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. I am providing this testimony on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Montana.

I am here today to voice our support for House Bill 471.

God entrusts children to parents and it is parents, first and foremost, who enjoy the privilege and responsibility of forming their children and providing them with an integral education. Parents have a particular responsibility in the area of sexual education. Children should be taught the meaning of sexuality and learn to appreciate the human and moral values connected with it, including its connection to a healthy self-identity. If parents choose to engage others in assisting with the sexual education of their children, they have an obligation to inquire about the content and methods used in order to verify that such an important and sensitive topic is dealt with properly.

House Bill 471 affirms that parents have a crucial and irreplaceable responsibility and role in their children's development generally and particularly in the delicate area of human sexuality. Perhaps too often today, parents are unaware of what is being taught in the classroom. Requiring schools to notify parents of the instruction to be offered in the area of human sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation, and explicitly requiring schools to obtain written permission from parents prior to the provision of such identity instruction, reinforces the role of parents as the primary teachers of their children. This approach also provides the opportunity to further the collaboration between parents and schools that is so essential to the proper formation and education of the children in their care.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I urge a "do pass" and thank you for your time.

Matthew Brower, Executive Director
Montana Catholic Conference