

## **Senate Bill 0364: Anne Arundel County - Board of Education - Parent's Right to Challenge Curriculum Act**

Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Kerry Gillespie, I am an Anne Arundel County resident and a proud mama bear of 4 children.

I would like to start by thanking Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this vital bill.

According to Mahatma Gandhi; "Every home is a university and the parents are the teachers". Bill SB0364 is necessary because schools are not the only place our children learn. As a daughter of a former teacher, I know how unquestionably valuable educators and schools are to our children. However, parents are their children's first, foremost and forever teachers.

To most parents, the education our children receive in public schools should primarily encompass the "3 R's"; reading, writing and arithmetic. Before Covid lockdowns and school closures, even the most involved guardians like myself, whose faces were known in school buildings, trusted that this was the education our children were receiving in school.

However, the more our homes became our children's classrooms the past two years, the more we came to know the truth about what was in our children's curriculum. As parents became backup educators, many of us were horrified to find what our children were actually learning in school.

What our schools are either choosing or being forced to teach in the curriculum is many times actually the responsibility of the home. Of course, children need to have basic manners and respect for all reinforced within the school walls. But the role of parents in many aspects of our children's educational curriculum has been fundamentally cut off in many ways. Morals, ethics, and values must be lived, cultivated, and reinforced daily in the home, and are personal family choices based on many factors including religious, spiritual and political beliefs. These are not issues to be solely taught in schools.

It is a basic parental right to have a voice in our children's education. Allowing parents to create petitions against potentially problematic curriculum gives us a say in their education and creates a system of checks and balances to hold the creators of curriculum accountable.

Nothing is more reflective of the outcome of a student's performance in school than parental involvement. Therefore, a school's greatest resource to ensure success in their student body is to partner with parents and guardians in all aspects, including curriculum creation. After all, as Philosopher George Santayana said, "A child educated only at school is an uneducated child."