



March 21, 2023

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education & the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Julia Letlow
Member, Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable Aaron Bean
Chairman, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

Dear Chairwoman Foxx:

As concerned parents and medical professionals, we are writing to support the right of parents to oversee the education of their children and to be directly involved in all decisions regarding their health care.

Over the decades, a great divide has developed in communication between parents, teachers, and other professionals on these issues. Although we recognize circumstances may exist in families that can make this challenging at times, it is essential that the presumption be in favor of parents' rights and responsibilities regarding their children's education and welfare.

Parents are to be the primary formators of the conscience and education of their children and are responsible to ensure all health care interventions are made in the child's best interest and with the consent of parents.

Without clear communication and engagement between schools and parents, the responsibility often is placed on children to discern right from wrong and truth from untruth. Common sense tells us that children and adolescents should not be put in this position, especially when children are being exposed to information, without the consent or knowledge of their parents, that could influence the child's decisions. The resulting confusion and distress have undoubtedly contributed to the epidemic of mental health disturbances in our youth today.

As health care professionals, we are particularly concerned with protecting the welfare of children and adolescents in the settings of medical examinations and procedures. Minors need a parent advocate during encounters with a health care professional to ensure the child is safe and the values of the family are respected.

It is not appropriate for healthcare professionals to assume the role of primary formator. It is also dangerous to isolate children from their parents during medical treatments and procedures.

Imagine, for example, a case in which a child is treated for a mental health disorder with counseling or medication without the parent's knowledge or consent. Who will monitor the child, care for the child, and ensure the child has proper follow-up with the medical professional?

Children are beautiful, resilient, and intelligent, but they also require and desire assistance in their journey to adulthood. It is essential and only appropriate to promote and support parents in this God-given vocation to form and protect their children.

By ensuring that the rights of parents are honored and protected in public schools, we support your efforts to address the importance of upholding the fundamental right of parents to direct their children's education and to oversee all decisions regarding health care evaluations and treatment. We believe this is essential to creating open communications between parents, teachers, and medical professionals, enhancing cooperation and collaboration in childhood development leading to improved educational performance and health.

Respectfully,

Steven White, MD
President
Catholic Health Care Leadership Alliance

Dr. Michael Artigues
President
American College of Pediatricians

Jeffrey Barrows, DO, MA
Senior VP Bioethics and Public Policy
Christian Medical & Dental Association

Dr. Erin Brewer
President
Advocates Protecting Children

Mike Chupp, MD, FACS
CEO
Christian Medical & Dental Association

Dr. Michelle Cretella
Advisory Board
Member Advocates Protecting Children

Dr. Marie T. Hilliard, MS, JCL, Ph.D., RN
Senior Fellow
The National Catholic Bioethics Center

Paul W Hruz, MD, Ph.D.
Pediatric Endocrinologist
Associate Professor of Pediatrics

Andrew J. Mullally, MD
Family Physician

Michael S. Parker, MD, KM
Past President
Catholic Medical Association

Craig L. Treptow MD
Family Physician

Louis Brown, JD
Executive Director
Christ Medicus Foundation

Joseph Meaney, Ph.D
President
The National Catholic Bioethics Center

Patricia A. Sayers, DNP RN
President
National Association of Catholic Nurses, USA

Dr. Yehuda Mond
Chair
Coalition for Jewish Values Healthcare Council