

March 15, 2021

To: Montana House Education Committee

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

Re: Testimony in support of SB 99

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. I speak on behalf of the two Roman Catholic bishops of Montana.

I am here today to voice our support for Senate Bill 99.

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. 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.

Senate Bill 99 affirms that parents have a crucial and irreplaceable responsibility and role in their children's moral development generally and in particular 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 and explicitly advise parents of their right to withdraw their children from such 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.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I urge a "do concur" and thank you for your time.