



PARENTS DEFENDING EDUCATION

ACTION

**STATEMENT: So-called ‘Children’s Bill of Rights’ Subverts
Parental Authority**

January 20, 2023

Over the past three years, Florida has emerged a leader in the fight for parental rights, educational transparency, and depoliticized classrooms. While other states forced students to learn virtually for more than a year—to the detriment, first and foremost, of those children—Florida schools reopened quickly. And, on the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress, Florida fourth and eighth graders achieved the highest ever scores for the Sunshine State.

Unfortunately, bad actors seek to undo those achievements. On January 17, 2023, Florida Representative Michele Rayner-Goolsby filed a House Bill 217, the “Children’s Bill of Rights Act.”

This act would strip the rights of parents, as established in Florida state law, to direct “the education, upbringing, and care of their minor child.” If passed, this bill could allow state agencies to assume responsibility over a minor child who is “denied” the ability to express elements of his or her identity or is considered a “vulnerable youth” based on a “lack of positive adult relationships.” Of course, in these cases, it would be up to the court or bureaucrats in state agencies to make these decisions.

Family relationships are essential for a child’s mental health and wellbeing. In recent years, activists have attempted to strip the rights of parents to be involved in their child’s education and in their lives. Notably, gender activists have sought to give children the ability to make life-altering decisions about their mental and physical health without input from their parents. This has resulted in the passage of a California law, which makes the state a “sanctuary” for minors seeking medical gender transitions. If passed, this House Bill 217 could strip from parents their ability to intervene when they believe their child’s pursuit of living as a certain “identity” could have catastrophic, life-altering consequences.

This bill, at its core, seeks to dismantle one of the foundational elements of our society: the family unit.

If passed, House Bill 217 would open the door for sweeping subversions of parental rights in the Sunshine state. Parents Defending Education implores lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to swiftly and decisively “kill” the bill—and defend the rights of all Florida parents.