

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD | HF22 | PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES | EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE

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Minnesotans for Health & Parental Rights has been a trusted community for over a decade, bringing together families, healthcare practitioners, legal professionals, educators, childcare providers, and business owners. What began as a grassroots support group grew into a broader movement as we encountered more families facing unexpected challenges.

As these needs grew, so did our mission. We began collaborating with like-minded organizations, including The Parental Rights Foundation, a national nonprofit dedicated to protecting parental rights. We both work to equip parents with the knowledge and connections they need to make informed decisions for their children. Whether it's providing resources for families navigating educational or healthcare decisions, helping them advocate in accessing services for disabled loved ones, supporting healthcare professionals and educators, or fostering open discussions, our goal remains the same: to strengthen communities by ensuring families have access to the information and support they need.

For generations, parental rights were considered a given—a fundamental principle guiding families and society. It was widely understood that parents are the most invested, best equipped, and most reasonable individuals to make decisions for their minor children, raising them according to their values and cultural traditions. This principle shaped legal and societal norms for centuries. However, in 2000, the Supreme Court's split decision in *Troxel v. Granville* opened the door for individual judges and states to apply their own interpretations of parental rights. This has led to inconsistency, confusion, and a lack of stability for families seeking to fulfill their role as the primary decision-makers in their children's lives. Our testimony today reflects the experiences of countless parents and professionals who have turned to us for help navigating these challenges. Many were invited to testify in person, but most were either unable to attend on short notice or too fearful of the potential consequences of sharing their stories publicly. In today's volatile political climate, families worry about being singled out or made an example of as states and the federal government begin to clash over authority in these matters. We appreciate the opportunity to share their voices and underscore the importance of strong families as the foundation of strong communities.

## Real-World Experiences from Families Underscoring the Need for a Parents' Bill of Rights

### Parental Access to Medical Records & Treatment Decisions

- Parents of a 12-year-old with profound autism have been denied access to their child's medical records due to company privacy policies, delaying necessary care for chronic conditions.
- Parents of an 8-year-old diagnosed with PANDAS (Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcal Infections) were similarly locked out of their child's medical records.
- Hundreds of families across Minnesota—including those using Fairview, Health Partners, Mayo, CentraCare, Gillette, Allina, Essentia, and Children's hospitals and clinics—have reported similar experiences.
- Parents have been forced out of exam rooms while their preteen or teenage children receive medical care, despite their objections.
- A local hospital refused to inform a single mother about her 14-year-old's treatment plan because the child did not want her involved—despite the fact that the child was hospitalized for refusing to take prescribed medications in the first place.

### Threats & Consequences for Seeking Alternative or Informed Care

- A South Metro family was subjected to a CPS investigation after taking their child to a chiropractor for complementary therapy to relieve pain from a medical condition. Despite chiropractic care being used alongside standard treatment, CPS continues to monitor the family.
- A local hospital refused to approve parent's requests to a transfer of care to another local hospital to obtain a second opinion on a condition (Mast Cell Activation Syndrome) because the doctor "did not believe in" it. The other local hospital had a specialist in the condition on staff willing to take direct responsibility for the transfer. The initial hospital threatened CPS if the parent's pursued it, so they were forced to stay and accept treatments that were not suited to the condition. The child *was* diagnosed with the condition by specialists post discharge.
- Numerous families have been denied organ transplants for refusing COVID-19, flu, or other vaccines.
- Several families were threatened with CPS intervention for declining the Hepatitis B vaccine at birth—despite the fact that Hepatitis B is primarily transmitted through sexual contact or shared needles.
- Pregnant mothers have reported experiencing harassment at OBGYN offices for declining flu, Tdap, and COVID vaccines during pregnancy. Some were repeatedly pressured with statements like, "if you get covid while pregnant it increases your risk for stillbirth" and "Just know, every time you come in here I'm going to bug you about it." While others were outright denied prenatal care.

- A family reported having a child with a rare autoimmune condition with few provider options. During Covid, the child was denied medical care by his specialist for not taking the covid vaccine- that wasn't even yet approved for his age bracket.
- Hundreds of families have been denied medical care at various clinics due to their personal medical decisions.
- Families have reported losing health insurance coverage for their trusted family practice clinics—not due to complaints or violations, but because the insurance company disapproved of the clinic's stance on respecting parental rights.

### **Education & Parental Rights in Schools**

- School districts have attempted to deny parents access to curriculum and have refused requests to opt their children out of content that does not align with their culture, faith or belief system.
- Schools have administered controversial surveys to students, even after parents explicitly opted out.
- A family with a special needs child was pressured and bullied by their public school when they decided to homeschool.

### **Parental Exclusion from Their Children's Mental Health & Well-being**

- A Minneapolis couple was denied the right to participate in family therapy with their 16-year-old. The clinic cited privacy concerns, even though the child had not requested confidentiality.
- Parents of a teenager struggling with anxiety, OCD, and focus issues were told their child had to personally consent to a neuropsychological evaluation before they could proceed.
- A psychologist denied parents access to information about what medications and dosages were prescribed to their teenager experiencing suicidal ideations.

A Parents' Bill of Rights would provide critical protection for families, ensuring their ability to make informed decisions without fear of government overreach or medical coercion.

We have also received feedback from both education and healthcare professionals who have expressed significant concerns about the growing challenges they face in balancing institutional policies with the rights of parents and families. Below are some of the key issues they have raised:

### **Concerns from Healthcare Professionals**

- **Unprofessional Conduct and Violations of Medical Ethics:** Providers report seeing an increase in unprofessional conduct by institutions, often in violation of American Medical Association (AMA) standards, leading to decreased trust in healthcare systems.

- **Lack of Accountability:** The Minnesota Medical Board’s failure to enforce compliance with AMA standards has contributed to a loss of confidence among patients and healthcare professionals.
- **Limited Access to Care:** Families are increasingly avoiding certain hospitals due to concerns over institutional policies that do not align with patients’ rights or medical ethics. They are also being denied care from numerous clinics and losing access to essential services.
- **Non-traditional Healthcare:** Many families are turning to alternative care paths because they feel their rights to informed consent and medical decision-making are being disregarded.
- **Undue Pressure on Parents:** Providers have observed cases where parental consent is bypassed or ignored in favor of institutional mandates, reducing parents' ability to make informed decisions about their children's health.

A *Parents' Bill of Rights* would provide clearer boundaries for healthcare professionals, ensuring that parents have the autonomy to make informed decisions without fear of overreach or discrimination.

### **Concerns from Educational Professionals**

- **Withholding Information from Parents:** Teachers report being instructed not to disclose certain discussions, lessons, or services provided to students, particularly on sensitive topics.
- **Limited Parental Involvement:** Schools require student consent—not parental—for mental health services, assessments, and disciplinary actions, excluding parents from key decisions.
- **Confusing Opt-Out Policies:** Inconsistent guidelines create frustration for both educators and parents trying to navigate curriculum exemptions and school surveys.
- **Overreaching Government Mandates:** Educators feel state and federal directives often override parental input, prioritizing compliance over student needs.
- **Parental Exclusion in Discipline:** Schools enforce suspensions and behavioral interventions without sufficient parental involvement, leaving educators in a difficult position.
- **Special Education Barriers:** Bureaucratic obstacles make it harder for parents to advocate for IEPs and accommodations, restricting collaboration between educators and families.

A *Parents' Bill of Rights* would provide clear guidelines to support educators in working transparently with families, ensuring parents remain actively involved in their children’s education.

In conclusion, the experiences shared here highlight the urgent need for a *Parents' Bill of Rights* to provide clear, consistent protection for parents and families across Minnesota. As we've seen, the lack of this in current statutes leaves families vulnerable to confusion, discrimination, and unnecessary interventions by institutions. By ensuring that parental rights are firmly established and respected, we can foster stronger communities where families have the support and autonomy to make the best decisions for their children. A *Parents' Bill of Rights* will not only safeguard the role of parents but also help educators, healthcare providers, and other professionals navigate their responsibilities with confidence, ultimately benefiting everyone in Minnesota. Thank you for the opportunity to share these concerns and continue the conversation for a stronger, more supportive framework for families across our state.

Sincerely,

Minnesotans for Health & Parental Rights

ParentalRights.org | MN

