

House Education Committee
HB 4728
Representative Ann Bollin, District 42

Madame Chair and committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to HB 4728 this morning.

This bill amends the Public Health Code to prevent state or local emergency orders from prohibiting or limiting graduation commencement ceremonies and will allow public and nonpublic schools to honor graduating seniors for the graduating classes of 2020 or 2021.

For so many of us, our high school graduation was the highlight of our senior year. Memories are made and dreams are shared. Too many of our kids - parents and grandparents - missed out on this milestone last year. They will never get that time back.

Graduation is also a milestone in a young person's life. One they wish to share with all those that led them and supported them along the way. It is traditionally the time when young people turn the page and start writing their own stories.

I have heard from thousands of parents, grandparents, and students - how they have followed the rules and pressed on beyond what they thought possible but still - they yearn for some normalcy and some tradition. One last chance to be together and to celebrate!

Our schools have demonstrated their ability to safely educate our students and many school districts like mine in Livingston County have been able to offer in-person and remote learning since Day One. They know how to pivot, how to deliver education paths responsibly and responsively to meet their own local expectations and preferences.

HB 4728 will allow districts across the state to offer a time-honored tradition of commencement ceremonies. This bill does not require a district to offer this option - it just enables them to in a manner that suits their district. The current suggested gathering limits would not even allow all the graduates at 3 of my high schools to have both parents witness this momentous occasion. That is just not right.

It is time to celebrate these young lives and give them the send-off they deserve. I believe they can, and will, do it safely and thankfully, as they turn the page on their early years.

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB 4728 to the committee and I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.