

HB 445 Proponent Testimony
Rev. Eli Williams

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and House Primary and Secondary Education Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 445.

My name is Eli Williams, and I am from Clark County. I am a pastor and the founder of a nonprofit organization. For 25 years, my organization provided an after-school spiritual enrichment program for thousands of public-school children. Unfortunately, the volunteer-based after-school model waned because there were not enough volunteers. However, parents and their children still desire such programming. Released time programming is the answer.

I believe parents should have the right to enroll their children in released time programs for religious instruction. There are plenty of good reasons. Let's start with: It's their children! They know what is best for them. Why should parents relinquish their God-given parenting rights to a school system that they fund with their tax dollars?

Religious instruction positively impacts student behavior, academics, and mental health. Improved attendance has also been documented. So, it is good for the school! Many parents are not able to utilize religious private school or homeschool options. Released time makes religious education available to those who don't have access.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for House Bill 445.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Eli Williams