

May 29, 2024

Dear Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 445. I am Julie Bowers from Delaware County.

Parent choice regarding Release Time Religious Instruction is a first-freedom that needs to be spelled out and protected for all Ohio families of faith with a yes vote on HB445.

Not all families can afford or have access to private religious education for their children but do value and would enroll their students in a once a week, daytime release program that reinforces the moral values and character training that are the backbone of this country since its founding.

Our family lives in the largest school district in Delaware Co, yet we opted to remove our children from the public school system and send them to a private religious school in the next county. It was both a financial and time commitment made on behalf of our children's development. We wanted them to learn important Godly-based morals and personal discipline in the context of our family's faith. Now, as young adults, I see the value in that investment as they begin to live independently and take on adult challenges. Their employers also call out unique standards of work ethic, social engagement and confidence that they observe in our young adult children. I attribute that to the religious instruction tied to our faith and the priority my husband and I placed on that journey for our children.

Thank you for allowing me to speak up in support of HB445. Thank you for your service to the citizens of Ohio!

Sincerely,

Julie Bowers
Powell, OH
Delaware Co