

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. My name is Lisa Gasser and I am from Wayne County.”

I believe House Bill 445 is very important to be passed for the residents of Ohio. First of all, I believe that parents should have the opportunity to decide if their children can participate in released time Bible education, not school officials. When the law states schools ‘may’ participate instead of ‘shall’ participate it leaves the decision to allow students the opportunity to attend released time Bible education up to school officials instead of their parents.

I saw this in person approximately 12 years ago in our school. There was a movement to begin released time Bible education in our local school district. This was a year long process, and there was much support from the community for this program. The team attempting to begin released time Bible education had witnessed other programs, been to the school board multiple times, had community informational meetings and had gained much support for the program. However, after all of this, the decision was simply ‘no’ by the school. This took the decision to allow released time Bible education for their children away from their parents, and instead the school made the decision for the parents.

Parents know what is best for their children. They should get to decide whether to include religious instruction in their children’s schedule. Often private school religious instruction is out of reach financially or logistically for these parent’s children. Released Time makes religious instruction available for those who don’t have access.

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

Sincerely,

Lisa Gasser