

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 Stephen Doyle and I am from Franklin County.

The United States Supreme Court has confirmed that released time religious instruction is in keeping with the Constitution, provided that the instruction is off public-school grounds, privately funded and done with parental consent. These qualifications ensure that released time religious instruction does not run afoul of the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from establishing a state religion or providing government funding for religious purposes.

In the interest of providing public school students with as well-rounded and balanced an education as possible, allowing for them to include religious studies during their school day is invaluable. As any student of history can testify, religion has played an indispensable role in shaping our world. Arts, literature, ethics, law and many other facets of our society have their roots in religious teaching and tradition.

Parents can and should be offered the opportunity to include religious studies in their child's education. Public schools currently allow students to take time away from school for non-educational activities such as family vacations and inclement weather. If these are valid reasons for students not to be in the classroom, the idea that allowing approximately one hour per week for released time religious instruction will detrimentally impact the students is simply unfounded.

In consideration of the above, I strongly encourage you to pass House Bill 445. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for House Bill 445.

Sincerely,

Stephen Doyle