

May 30, 2024

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 Frances Flowers, and I am from Franklin County.

Ohio law ORC 3313.6022 allows for released time for religious classes, however school officials can veto parents, denying students access. I witnessed this personally as the Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education voted to rescind its Released Time Religious Instruction policy on October 20, 2022, which took away parents' rights to choose religious instruction for their children. Yet, parents in other Ohio school districts do have the choice to exercise their right to choose to have their children participate in religious education during the school day.

HB 445 amendment changes a single word from may to shall so that all districts adopt a Released Time Religious Instruction policy, giving parents the choice to provide religious instruction for their children. As a retired Ohio educator, I appreciated parents that were involved in their students' education. Parents know what is best for their children. They should be able to determine whether to include religious education in their students' schedule. I fully support HB 445.

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

Sincerely,

Frances Flowers