

5/30/2024

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. My name is Jessica Cappuzzello and I am from Franklin County.

My children currently participate in a released time program, and I have been able to see the benefits firsthand. We are fortunate that in our district, we are able to make the choice for our children to participate in released time during the school day while still attending a public school. Passing House Bill 445 would allow ALL parents in every district in Ohio to have the opportunity to choose released time religious instruction for their children if they so choose. By not allowing this change, it takes away parental choice and gives only a few people the chance to decide for an entire community. The good news is, passing this Bill would allow released time for ANY religion, so it is very inclusive. Also, parents still need to give permission, so it is every individual family's choice whether they want their children to participate or not. Passing this Bill does not do any harm to the people who oppose it, because they have the power to choose NOT to send their children to a released time program. On the contrary, unless it is passed, there are families who would WANT this for their children but may not have the opportunity if the Bill is not passed. Please consider passing House Bill 445 so that it levels the playing field, and ALL families have the choice to choose released time religious instruction.

The program my children participate in focuses on character attributes like patience, courage, perseverance, and kindness. Don't we all need a little more of that (especially if the parents want it for their children??)

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

Sincerely,

Jessica Cappuzzello