

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 David Burkholder and I am from Fulton County.

The change being made in House Bill 445 is critical in giving parents the ultimate decision making regarding participation for their children in religious instruction during school hours. This 1st year alone has seen a 70% participation in second grade within the Wauseon Exempted Village School district. Without passage of this bill, school districts have the control to limit/deny grade participation regardless of parental desires. This denies parents' access to do what is right for **their** children.

Research indicates that children involved in religious instructions demonstrate positive and/or socially improved behaviors, which leads to stability in homes, classrooms and/or communities. This has been evidenced not only in independent studies but in actuality within the aforementioned 2nd grade participation, For example, one student verbalized he had "anger issues." At the end of the year, teachers and volunteers were in disbelief that his unhealthy behaviors, attitude and speech had become reversed. Positive changes are visibility recognizable.

The change made in this bill does not change the right granted by the federal government to use school time, off campus, voluntarily with parental consent and using no taxpayer funding. It rightly grants parents choice without impingement by local school districts.

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

Respectfully,

David Burkholder