

Cindy Reed—Parent Johnstown, OH gingerbreadlatte1@gmail.com 614-406-5195

Chair Manning, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Cindy Reed and I come to you today as a parent who wants the best educational and enrichment options for my children. I also come to you as a representative of nearly 500 fellow community members in Johnstown, Ohio and many more throughout the state who share my perspective. I speak today to encourage your support for House Bill 445.

When I became aware of the option for Release Time for Religious Instruction, I was very excited that this could be an option during the school day. With so many competing after-school and weekend activities, I welcomed the chance to CHOOSE a religious instruction opportunity for my child DURING THE SCHOOL DAY. However, my school district rescinded the policy allowing parents to have this choice. This was shocking because the school administration had been presented with a plan by the local LifeWise steering committee that would provide the program during lunch and recess so that students would not miss any class time at all. Many people spoke at the board meeting to urge that board NOT to rescind the policy but our requests fell on deaf ears. We continue to be saddened and confused. Why are so many others around the state able to access released time religious instruction but it has been cut off from our families?

I come to you asking you to vote YES on HB 445 to give parents like me and others around the state, the CHOICE to provide this release time to our children.

If ALL children have the option with parental consent, RTRI could make a great impact on society and this brings an EQUITABLE opportunity for all children, yet required for none, and at no cost to the schools. This impact has been proven by studies performed by organizations who are currently utilizing this in other locations.

RTRI gives the choice back to the parents while preserving the separation of religion and public schools due to the fact it is not promoted or funded by the school district and is completely optional for the students. Once again, I urge you to vote yes on HB 445 to give the power back to the parents for RTRI.

Caleb Reed-Student in Johnstown, OH (Caleb's parent -Cindy Reed)

Chair Manning, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Caleb Reed. I am a student in Johnstown Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of House Bill 445. First I would like to make it known that I am here because I really want to be, not because of an expectation of parents or other leaders. I would love the opportunity to have a release time program at my school because I think it would help kids affirm their beliefs and help their mental health. Unfortunately, in spite of nearly 500 people in my community that said they would support this type of programming, the Board of Education has denied it. Why is it possible that a Board of Education can make a decision to block a released time religious instruction program when so many people want that opportunity? I would like the opportunity for me and my friends to learn about God during the school day. Having this opportunity should be a choice parents can make for their kids.

Thank you

