

HB 445 Proponent Testimony
Mark Hess

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 Mark Hess, and I am a resident of Richland County. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 445, which I believe is crucial in affirming parental rights and educational freedom.

As a parent, I firmly believe that it is our right to have the opportunity to choose released time religious instruction for our children, such as the LifeWise program. This type of instruction provides a valuable option for parents who wish to incorporate religious education into their children's lives in a manner that aligns with their values and beliefs

Released time religious courses have a measurable positive impact on students and schools in the Richland County area and across Ohio. These programs contribute to the moral and ethical development of students, fostering a well-rounded educational experience. Furthermore, parents inherently know what is best for their children. They should have the right to decide whether to include religious education in their student's schedule.

Many parents are not in a position to utilize religious private school or homeschool options due to financial or logistical constraints. Released time makes religious education accessible to those who otherwise would not have access. This inclusivity ensures that all parents, regardless of their circumstances, have the opportunity to provide their children with an education that includes their religious values.

House Bill 445 empowers parents to make these important decisions, ensuring that each family can choose the path they feel is best for their children's overall development. It is vital that we uphold this right and do not take away the freedom of choice from parents who desire to provide their children with a well-rounded education that includes religious instruction.

Thank you once again for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for House Bill 445. I sincerely hope that you will consider the positive impact this bill will have on families throughout our state.

Sincerely,

Mark Hess