

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. Our names are Tom and Kelly Richards and we are from Lucas County.

Passing House Bill 445 would provide the opportunity for any parent to choose released time religious instruction which is paramount in supporting the fundamental right to religious freedom and expression. This choice would allow families to integrate important faith-based values and beliefs into their children's education, ensuring a small fraction of the significant time spent during school incorporates aligning moral and ethical development. In a diverse society, providing parents with options for religious instruction during school hours respects the varied cultural and religious backgrounds of students, promoting inclusivity and understanding among different communities.

As well, released time religious instruction offers parents a valued partner in their children's holistic education, fostering a strong sense of identity and purpose. It recognizes the importance of nurturing not only academic but also spiritual growth, which has proven to significantly contribute to a child's overall well-being and character development. By allowing this choice, schools and communities can collaborate to create a supportive environment where educational and religious needs are met in partnership, preparing students to be well-rounded individuals who can positively contribute to society.

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

Sincerely,

Tom Richards

Kelly Richards

Tom Richards
Kelly Richards