

Good afternoon Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arther, Ranking Member Robinson, and distinguished members of the primary and secondary education committees.

I am writing to express my concerns about HB 445. I am a mom to two school aged children in Summit County, Ohio. I am an involved parent who works homecoming dances, book fairs, attends conferences and supervises field trips.

While my concerns are numerous concerning this bill, to keep it brief I will focus on the disruption to the school day.

Governor DeWine has promoted research that if a student momentarily looks at their cell phone, it takes 20 minutes for that student's distraction to wane. And if they interact with their cell phone it takes 50 minutes for their distraction to wane. If a student leaves for an RTRI program, how long would it take for that student to get back on task? If you have ever supervised a field trip of elementary school students, you would know that it is impossible to get them to focus on learning when they return. In fact, getting them out the door in a quiet, organized manner that does not disrupt the remaining school body can prove difficult as well.

What happens if a non-traditional religion wants to come in and bring an RTRI program to the school district? For example, if the Church of Wicca, Satanic Temple, Jehovah's Witnesses or Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints wants to come in - what would stop them? How much distraction is acceptable in the school day? The focus should be on education. Not religion - particularly in a public school. There are many parochial schools throughout Ohio that can accommodate religious education.

Ohio is rife with churches and opportunities for bible study and worship. Sunday schools are offered at every church. These programs can also operate before or after school. It's not that I am anti-faith. I am anti-disrupting the school day.

Ohio ranks 30/50 in education in the US. (<https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/school-education-state-rank-best-worst-b2586035.html>) Is pulling kids out of school for religion a way to bring that up? When they missed a "specials" class and now are going into math or science and can't get back on task, how is that going to help Ohio's abysmal 60% score? I know I am not happy when my kids bring home a 60% on a test and I am not happy that Ohio ranks 30/50 for education. Further, the courses that are proposed that they miss (music, library, STEM, PE, art) create well-rounded students and help them find their interests and passion.

Representative Click, in his testimony from the first reading states that the following language is in the Ohio constitution:

“Religion and morality being necessary to good government, schools shall be established.”<sup>1</sup>

The quote from the Ohio Constitution is actually:

Religion, morality, and knowledge, however, being essential to good government, it shall be the duty of the general assembly to pass suitable laws to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of public worship, **and** to encourage schools and the means of instruction (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

Whether intentional or not, Representative Click presenting just portions of the language from the Ohio Constitution make it appear that the Constitution is requiring schools to be established for religion. The quote as provided by Representative Click muddies the waters of separation of church and state. Similar to how allowing LifeWise or any other religious program during the public-school day borders a violation of separation of church and state. However, when reading the entire quote, it is clear that Article I, Section 7 of the Ohio Constitution establishes two separate provisions. One being protection for every religion and separately, encouraging schools and the means of instruction. As Representative Click correctly stated, the language does trace back to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The principal provisions of that document include a bill of rights protecting religious freedom, the right to a writ of habeas corpus, the benefit of trial by jury, and other individual rights. The ordinance also encouraged education and forbade slavery. Nowhere in either the Ohio Constitution or in the Northwest Ordinance is the quote as outlined in Representative Click’s written testimony.

For these reasons (and others not listed) I am asking you not to pass the bill as it is currently written.

Thank you,

Brooke Gorbach

Zip: 44685

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<sup>1</sup>[https://search-prod.lis.state.oh.us/api/v2/general\\_assembly\\_135/committees/cmte\\_h\\_primary\\_secondary\\_ed\\_1/meetings/cmte\\_h\\_primary\\_secondary\\_ed\\_1\\_2024-04-23-0300\\_1160/testimony/10806/uploaded-doc/](https://search-prod.lis.state.oh.us/api/v2/general_assembly_135/committees/cmte_h_primary_secondary_ed_1/meetings/cmte_h_primary_secondary_ed_1_2024-04-23-0300_1160/testimony/10806/uploaded-doc/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-constitution/section-1.7>