



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 submit testimony **in opposition to House Bill 445**, a bill that will mandate disruptive Release Time for Religious Instruction (RTRI) policies that promote division, impede the success of students in public schools, and undermine our Ohio educators and local authorities.

Our Ohio youth deserve classroom environments that are safe and affirming of all identities, beliefs, and cultures. Schools are where many students are exposed to peers of diverse backgrounds and learn how to find commonalities and community, many fundamental lessons arising beyond the prescribed curriculum. Religious pluralism and the right of students to religious expression are a fundamental part of this exchange. **However, House Bill 445 directly opposes these ideals by mandating the LifeWise Academy's predatory, discriminatory, and disruptive program. Compulsory RTRI policies—even off-campus—during school hours threaten to undermine this inclusive mission.**

While broadly there are countless issues with HB 445, I would like to focus on the **harm to LGBTQ+ students and families that compulsory programs like this have by creating social pressure among students, causing divisions or marginalization of students who opt out due to different beliefs, or divisions because of the rhetoric of the religious instruction itself.** By forcing schools to adopt these policies, HB 445 forces public schools to allow religious instruction of students that serves to further marginalize groups like LGBTQ+ students and families. LifeWise's curriculum is blatantly anti-LGBTQ+, and we have seen this create a dynamic ripe for bullying and harassment of [students already at higher risk](#), in districts that have adopted a similar RTRI policy.



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**Religious instruction during school hours requires school oversight and scheduling coordination, diverting critical resources and attention from core academic and educational priorities.** Mandating a policy for any religious instruction

inevitably enables programs like LifeWise to use public school resources, further deteriorating divisions between Church and State. This drain on taxpayer-funded resources and faculty capacity in conjunction with the divisive RTRI curriculum, [has caused school boards to reconsider the implementation](#). Local educators should have the ability to make these decisions without interference from the state.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony. **I urge the committee to oppose Ohio House Bill 445. Please stand with public educators and local schools, promoting the separation of Church and State, student safety and well-being, *NOT* predatory recruitment, divisive teaching, and classroom disruption.**

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions you may have.