

Opponent Testimony for HB 445

Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

November 10, 2024

Testimony from: Gregory R. Thorn

Chair Gayle Manning, Vice Chair Sarah Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Phil Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify regarding HB 445. My name is Gregory R. Thorn and I am a resident of Medina, OH and reside within the Medina City School District.

I am writing in opposition to HB 445.

HB 445 raises several issues that seem very recognizable. First, it defies the “separation of Church and State.” This house bill is a subversive scheme to incorporate religion into the academic school day by taking it off public school campus. Even by taking it off campus, it is still part of the school day.

Second, is the issue of disruption to the academic school day. Recently, Governor DeWine showed how allowing students use of cell phones during the day caused disruptions in the classroom and interfered with normal academic instruction. Now it is being proposed to allow students to be released to receive religious instruction. The logistics for all of this will definitely be disruptive.

The third issue is cost. With school districts receiving less money from the state each year for academic instruction, it seems ridiculous for additional obligations to be instituted to structure the school day around religious instruction for only a segment of the student population.

If parents or guardians feel so strongly that it is necessary for their children to receive religious instruction, then it should happen outside of school hours. They can utilize the time they have on evenings or weekends for that instruction and if it is that important, they should make it a priority outside of the school day without any time constraints.

Religious instruction should not be a burden felt by the educators, staff, children or parents of children who do not wish to participate.

I encourage you to vote NO on HB 445.

Gregory R. Thorn