

November 8, 2024

Wendy Hess  
1223 Ledgewood Drive  
Akron, OH 44333

Committee Chair Manning and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

My name is Wendy Hess and I am a 35-year resident of my community. I am a retired museum curator and writer, as well as the mother of two sons who received excellent educations in the Revere Public School District. I am extremely concerned about the efforts to promote religion within our public schools by way of HB 445, particularly at a time when there is so much discord in our nation.

I believe that the wording within HB 445 which takes the choice to have pull-out religious programs during the day away from school districts by making them mandatory will harm both school districts and the students who attend them. Pulling young children out during the school day will inevitably be disruptive for all, as well as taking valuable time away from teachers and staff. This will also potentially make students who choose not to attend these programs treated as outsiders and even taunted by the students who attend; I know for a fact this is already occurring in some districts.

Keeping church and state separated has served our nation well for many years. Why would we want to not only counter that, but take control away from districts and make it mandatory? The decision should be made by each community; what may be right for a small rural town may be quite wrong for a large suburban or urban district. Please vote against HB 445 and keep letting the districts—those who best know their own communities—make this decision.

Sincerely,

Wendy Hess