

Opponent Testimony for HB 445
Primary and Secondary Education Committee
November 11, 2024

Chair Gayle Manning, Vice Chair Sarah Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Phillip M. Robinson, Jr., and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

My name is Ruth Joan Huber of Wadsworth, OH. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my opposition to HB 445, which would change the wording for Released Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) by changing the wording from “may” to “shall” in Section 3313.6022 of the Ohio Revised Code.

I am a retired teacher (Medina City Schools, Medina, OH) and am concerned about the impact of mandating regular release time for religious instruction during the school day. While such release time might fit in well with some schools’ daily schedules, it presents a huge disruption to others. It is difficult enough to keep classes moving along together academically without additional ‘time outs’ for non-curricular activities. My experience has been that the faculty all dreaded the days when our schedules were interrupted by various assemblies (think in-school choir presentations, pep assemblies, special presentations, one act plays, etc), field trips, fire drills, shooter drills, special events, the list goes on and on. And now we face mandated release time for some students. If we continue instruction during that release time those released lose that instructional benefit, if we don’t the entire class is now behind where they need to be to complete the state approved curriculum by the end of the school year. We then have to rush through material that students need time to practice and assimilate before they are moved on to the next topic.

I have no objection to parents wanting religious instruction for their children. I myself attended public elementary schools, a parochial high school, a church affiliated college, received my Bachelor’s degree from a state university, and my Master’s of Education from another church affiliated University. However public schools must serve all their students and taking instructional time out of the day for religious instruction will not equally serve those students. Churches, synagogues, etc. have in place education for their believers in the form of Sunday schools, catechism, parochial schools, summer Bible programs, etc. Religious instruction is a private not public obligation. And our nation has long afforded parents the opportunity to provide the religious instruction of their choice outside of school hours. So I respectfully request that the local districts not be mandated to provide release time for this purpose, for the sake of our students’ education.