

November 10, 2024

Representative Manning,

My name is Tobias Gordon. I am a concerned parent with a child in the Westerville City School District and three younger children. I am writing to inform you that I strongly oppose House Bill 445, "Regards school policies for release for religious instruction". I ask that you vote against H.B. 445 if and when it is brought to a vote.

If HB 445 passes, the quality of my childrens' education will suffer. Release time programs will add a significant burden on my school administration and harm my childrens' learning. It is also *completely* unnecessary to require release time options during the school day when it can easily be provided after school, before school, or on weekends.

My eldest child is in second grade at a public school in Westerville. I have a five year old who will be starting kindergarten next school year, and two younger children as well. I take great pride in sending them to a high quality, publicly funded school. My district followed the desires of its students' parents and made an informed decision to rescind its Release Time for Religious Instruction, primarily due to logistical concerns.

Our teachers are overburdened on a daily basis. Burnout is high, resignations are high, and they want to focus on *teaching*.

I ask you to picture the day for a second grade teacher at a school with three release time organizations. At the risk of making this *sound* like a third grade math problem, if three children are in each RTRI program over lunch, that's extra attendance for 9 children. It's 9 lunches that need to be coordinated and kept safe.

This teacher needs to direct all of these children to a different location than the rest of their class when going to lunch. They or someone else on staff need to take attendance upon their return. They need to keep track of *four* groups of children, taking care that all are in the right place.

Picture recess is over. The kids are finally in their seats, ready to learn. But they have to wait, because one of the groups is late. Or, you get two minutes into the next lesson and you're interrupted. It takes another ten minutes to restore focus. That's not a minimal disruption to the school day.

The attorney general's opinion providing the basis for Release Time for Religious Instruction in Ohio schools states a requirement that "there was no expenditure of public funds other than for the minor expense of filing attendance reports".

I contend this is way more than a *minor* expense.

For these reasons and more, I ask that you do what is best for the children in Ohio and vote against HB 445.

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Thank you for your careful consideration of this issue.

Tobias Gordon