

**Opponent Testimony for H.B. 445  
Primary and Secondary Education Committee  
November 2024**

**Matthew Seymour, Westerville Resident**

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

Thank you for allowing my testimony today. My name is Matthew Seymour, and I am a lifelong **Republican, conservative, Catholic**. I am also a parent of a student who will be entering public school in Ohio in the coming years.

I am writing to express my **opposition to HB 445**, which seeks to alter Ohio's Release Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) policy, by changing the permissive "may" to "shall" in Section 3313.6022 of the Ohio Revised Code. I believe that this bill unnecessarily increases State government regulation and oversight of local, public school districts. I urge you to oppose this legislation for several key reasons:

- As a conservative, I believe that **the needs of the people are best met by the government that is closest to them**. Just as the federal government should not force regulation upon the states, nor do I believe that states should force this type of regulation on the cities.
- When Article VI, Section 3 of the Ohio Constitution, "Public School Systems, Boards of Education," gives the state the right to make laws for the "control of the public school system," it **does not oblige the state government to force policies HB445 proposes onto local communities**.
- As a fiscal conservative, I recognize that there is no regulation that the government puts on a community that does not have a cost to the taxpayer. In this case, the **administration required to manage permission slips**, management of access to-and-from the entrance of the school, coordination of pickup, all of these have a **clear, quantifiable cost**. As a Republican, **I implore you to recognize this and not force this burden on the taxpayer**, but instead let communities decide on whether this burden is appropriate.
- In *Zorach v Clauson*, the Supreme Court made it clear that RTRI policies are Constitutional, but the majority also noted that **"this program [the RTRI policy in question] may be unwise and improvident from an educational or a community viewpoint."** The Supreme Court made clear in this case that communities were the ones best suited to make the decision on RTRI programs, and if they choose to have them, this is acceptable.
- I strongly believe that there are **some school districts in Ohio where communities want RTRI policies**, and aligned with the viewpoint in *Zorach v Clauson*, there are some in which the community would find it unwise. Forcing RTRI on school districts where the community (by way of their elected school boards) does not want an RTRI policy simply adds a cost to the community, while leaving Section 3313.6022 as-is does nothing to prevent creation of an RTRI policy.

In conclusion, I ask that you consider my testimony and oppose HB 445. Please let these policy decisions be left to the Ohio communities you serve, and avoid implementing new regulations in Ohio that will add administration costs to our local communities. We elect conservatives in Ohio to create small government and keep our government local, and I hope that the view of this committee remains that small government is the best government.

*Matthew D Seymour*

Matthew Seymour  
November 10, 2024