

Opponent Testimony for H.B. 445
Primary and Secondary Education Committee
November 10, 2024

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 carefully reading and considering my statement. My name is Monique Judy. I currently reside in Plain City, Ohio and I'm a nurse practitioner in neurosurgery. In a former life, I was a social worker who provided therapy to children and adolescents in Toledo, Ohio, which is why I feel that I am in a position to comment on the welfare of the children of this state. I am writing to express my opposition to [HB 445](#). As a concerned community member and long-time resident of Ohio, I strongly object to requiring school districts to promote specific religious programming during the school day. I do not believe that children should be removed from important curriculum during the day in order to attend religious studies off campus. I find it even more distressing that the state would be proposing a bill that seems to benefit only one religious organization. Considering that our great nation's founding fathers did not believe that imposing religious beliefs on the citizens was moral or ethical, I find it exceptionally troubling that the state of Ohio is considering forcing schools to have a Religious Release Time policy. Furthermore, requiring the school to allow students to leave school is disruptive to their studies regardless of the subject missed. There is also evidence that other children who remain behind are often negatively affected by classes essentially being canceled and turned into study halls when too many children are absent. School districts should be able to determine what their children require for success within the school day.

If a parent feels strongly about religious education, they have the option to move their child to a religious school or take the time in the evenings and weekends to provide them with that education. If a child has certain parts of their faith that must occur during the day (such as prayer in the Muslim faith), we should be providing a space to accommodate these needs. However, it is quite evident that the spirit of the law that was created to allow for religious instruction during the day is not being honored by these lawmakers who are hoping to push a specific religious agenda on children. It absolutely violates the rights of the children to be free from religious indoctrination while in school as preferential treatment is clearly being given to Lifewise by the people we have elected to uphold the law. This is also creating a burden on public school systems to dedicate additional resources to ensuring the compliance of these programs and the safety of the children who attend, essentially making it so my tax dollars will be going towards religious education of students. Public funds are indirectly being used to shore up religious indoctrination, which is completely unacceptable.

Please consider my testimony and oppose H.B. 445. Please leave important decisions about when to adopt policy to the local school boards who were elected by their communities to make these decisions.

Thank you,

Monique Judy, AG ACNP, LISW-S