

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

Amanda Ellis

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 reading my testimony today. My name is Amanda Ellis. I am a citizen and mother in the Richfield, Ohio and Revere School District. I am testifying in opposition to House Bill 445, which seeks to alter the well-established system of Released Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) by changing the permissive “may” to “shall” in Section [3313.6022](#) of the Ohio Revised Code. I believe this unnecessary bill threatens the autonomy of local school boards and undermines constitutional principles. I urge you to oppose this legislation for several key reasons:

HB 445 raises concerns about potential conflicts with constitutional principles, particularly regarding the separation of church and state. By requiring Released Time Religious Instruction, the bill risks setting a troubling precedent where state mandates override local discretion in religious matters, a domain where public schools have traditionally exercised caution to ensure respect for diverse beliefs within the community.

For the past decade, RTRI programs have operated without significant issues under the current law. This balanced approach has allowed parents who wish for their children to participate in religious instruction the opportunity to do so while maintaining the integrity of public education. There is no evidence of systemic issues requiring legislative correction. The success of the existing RTRI framework demonstrates that the proposed changes are unnecessary, which is evident by the fact that according to [School Ministries Ohio](#), over 60% of all districts have a policy.

In summary, HB 445 is an unnecessary and potentially harmful piece of legislation. It threatens local control, violates constitutional principles, and risks undermining the quality of education in Ohio’s public schools. I urge you to protect the integrity of our education system and oppose HB 445. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Amanda Ellis