

To,

Honorable Members
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
The Ohio Legislature
135th General Assembly

Subject: Oppose House Bill 445 and RTRI policies in general

Dear Members,

I am writing this letter in the capacity of a parent, a psychiatrist, a practicing minority religion (Hindu), academician, religious educator, an intellectual and a concerned citizen of the country of United States. I am a resident of Summit County.

I am writing in all sincerity and best of reasoning to oppose House Bill 445.

My reasons to oppose this bill from passing are as follows:

1. I believe that religious education is important for the moral, psychological and spiritual growth of children. However, it is important to note that religion on the other hand can and has instilled biases and divided the society, communities and nations. Both, history and modern times are testimony to this.
2. Religious biases and divisiveness which already exist in schools can get out in the open due to above RTRI policies and lead to increase in peer pressure, conflicts, manipulative behaviors and bullying. These are issues that the public schools are already infested with and there is potential for it to get worse.
3. Such RTRI policies will/do take time away from the schools and cause disruption to the work flow with students and teachers alike. It also distracts from more useful classes and activities which are important in shaping a student's overall growth and health. These policies will bring down the overall quality of education in our schools.
4. Every time the student leaves because of RTRI and comes back to school, there are potential threats to the security of the student and to the school from the student upon returning.
5. Such priority to religion via RTRI policies are not going to make our schools safer. We all know from history and current affairs that most wars fought have been over religion and religious differences.
6. To learn and practice religion is a choice and not a mandate. Making religion mandatory is going to cause and spread disharmony. Religion is a pathway to realize God not a certain doctrine thrust upon people. It is the misuse of religion that has lead to much chaos around the world. Being forced to learn a certain religion goes against human rights and the methods that might get incorporated to carry this out is going to be against the very Constitution of this Country.
7. Many minority religious institutes or people belonging to minority religions may not have the means to provide transportation and other means to avail these RTRI policies. On the other hand, there could be better funded and politically driven religious organizations that might be able to carry this policy in a greater proportion. This discrepancy itself is breeding grounds for conflicts and disharmony.

8. Conflicts and differences that are seeded in schools through these direct and indirect ways can impact the psychological growth and mental health of innocent minds negatively. All this in the short and long run can lead to worsening drug usage, violence and loss of productivity.
9. All in all the quality of education which is already a challenge is going go down in our schools.

I am not in opposition of religious education, I am opposing how it is being imparted through unhealthy RTRI policies.

We already have a simple mechanism in place of taking our children to religious classes on Sundays. It worked perfectly for my two high achieving children, one of whom is a young adult and one is a senior in High School. They attended (my Senior High still attends) Sunday classes throughout their childhood. They are both peace loving and healthy productive citizens. They are both academicians, I believe is because they were not pulled in different directions when they were/are in school. And so are many of their friends who have had similar experience with the way religion was taught to them.

Finally, the only religion that there should be is that of truthfulness. Truthfulness is not an opinion, it is not a perspective, neither it is a policy. Truthfulness is about being closer to inner self and being able to answer to that inner self. The way the current RTRI policies are being laid out are confusing, conflicting and distracting the masses from truthfulness.

As a well wisher and concerned citizen of this country, I oppose the House Bill 445.

Sincerely,

Kamala Adury, MD