

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for taking this testimony. My name is Sarah Myers and I am the daughter of a public school teacher and a parent of a public school student, a 4th grader in the Hilliard School District. I am strongly opposed to bill number 445, because changing it as this bill proposes removes my choice as a parent.

This opposition is not against any particular faith or belief, but informed by my own experiences. As an adult, I am a person of strong Catholic faith, but this is DESPITE a parochial elementary and middle school that called itself "Christ's Community." I was ostracized by classmates and abused by teachers. One teacher regularly pulled my hair. Since this school was also part of my church, there was no place I could be that this judgment wasn't.

Attending a public high school felt like a balm, because I could grow and learn without that pressure. I was surrounded by different people and experiences and those, as well as parental guidance, helped me come to faith in my own way. My opposition is not about religion.

When I was choosing a school for my child, I sought to save her from the abuse and forces that were so harmful to me in parochial school. I chose a public school. Public schools are a public good. They both serve and accommodate every member of a community, and I have been extremely happy with the Ohio education she has gotten. Her classmates include young people from all over the world, including people of different faiths. Yet that is not who this bill seeks to protect.

HB 445 is championed by a particular organization whose mission is to "reach the unchurched" by bastardizing a Cold War era Supreme Court decision. They are trying to proselytize in public schools, according to their own literature and practice. It is the opposite of what I chose when I elected to send my student to a public school. Their lessons are not ones that I, as a Catholic, agree with.

Given the varying levels of religious diversity between districts, it is wise to allow each district to maintain "home rule," which HB 445 removes. It would force all districts across the state to permit any and all entities that call themselves "religion" to disrupt the school day by removing students, even when the teachings may not be compatible with the overall value of the residents.

To preserve the best in public education, I urge you to vote against this bill.