

Dear Representatives Manning, Arthur and Robinson,

We are writing in opposition to House Bill 455, Release for Religious Instruction. We are concerned about disruptions to the learning environment, alienation of students with alternate religious belief systems, additional stress on teachers who have limited time to cover necessary curriculum, and administrators' liability for students leaving school property and returning during the school day. After doing our own research, we are also concerned with hiring practices and lack of background checks for staff and teachers already associated with the organizations that are taking advantage of RTRI policies across the country. There appears to be some level of insufficient accountability and lack of full disclosure that parents may not be aware of.

Some organizations taking advantage of RTRI have explicitly expressed an anti-public school agenda and we firmly believe that any program our students are exposed to should support the values of the school district. This appears to be a slippery slope situation with unintended consequences in the future, when additional organizations/programs propose programs that allow students to be removed during the school day. Religious instruction should remain the purview of the parents, and is available at times other than during the school day. There are options for parents who desire a religion-based education for their children, and now the state provides vouchers to monetarily compensate parents for that decision. It is extremely important that our public schools remain supported by the state and independent from political maneuvering by special interest groups.

karen and Eric Pacht