



Center FOR Christian Virtue

Public Policy. Engagement. Education.

To: Chair Andrew Brenner
Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien
Ranking Member Catherine Ingram
Senate Education Committee

From: Nilani Jawahar
Legislative Liaison
Center for Christian Virtue

Re: Support for SB 49

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Nilani Jawahar and I am here on behalf of Center for Christian Virtue, Ohio's largest Christian public policy organization, to testify in support of Senate Bill 49, which would allow K-12 students up to three days of excused absence from school each academic year for religious observance.

To put it simply, students should not have to choose between practicing their faith and performing well academically. They should not have to worry that they will be penalized by the state for committing to their religious and spiritual formation. This bill would allow students who choose to take a religious expression day to make up any missed work at a later date so no student feels his religious observance is in conflict with his ability to obtain a good education.

What this bill aims to do is a practical accommodation for students of faith—and as we know, for the state to remain neutral on religion does not mean non-religious students should have an advantage over religious students, but that all students—regardless of their background and beliefs—should be reasonably accommodated as long as there is no compelling state interest to the contrary. Enacting a policy like this is a great way for us as Ohioans to value religious freedom and encourage our young people to take their faith seriously.

For these reasons, CCV urges the committee to vote 'yes' on Senate Bill 49. Thank you for allowing me to testify. I am happy to take any questions.

The Center for Christian Virtue (CCV) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that endeavors to create an Ohio where God's blessings of life, family, and religious freedom are treasured, respected, and protected.

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