

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram, my name is Dr Nega Debella and I represent American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee-Ohio branch (AEPAC-Ohio). I am here to testify in support of SB49 -Senator Michele Reynolds RED Bill.

This bill is important to my community as it impacts the children and the parents in religious ways. I appreciate that the bill will permit students to be absent up to three days for religious and spiritual reasons. This would go in line with religious freedom. It would allow students to freely practice their religion without state interference. It will also ensure students will not be penalized for missing class, examinations, and other class work. Students will freely celebrate and enjoy their religious freedom without fear of penalization for missing classes. I believe that school districts should be required to provide an opportunity for students to make up any missed examinations or academic work when they are absent for attending religious ceremonies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today. I am very grateful for this opportunity. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.