

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

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 293. My name is Barbara Willis and I am from Preble County living in the Eaton school district.

My husband and I had volunteered for Lifewise in Eaton for two years as an after school program. This year Lifewise would not allow the after school program as an option, wanting us to move to an in school program but the school board would not allow an in school program as is intended. Of the 4 school districts in the county, 2 are up and running, a 3rd is well on the way in getting established but the largest, Eaton, has basically shut us down. Their excuse is that the policy uses the word "may" instead of "will" and therefore allows them to decide whether to grant permission or not.

We have seen the benefit of the children learning positive character traits taught through Biblical stories especially in how they treat each other. I witnessed a 4th grade girl shut down a bully by quietly looking into the bully's eyes and saying "Audrey, you are trying to steal my joy. I'm saying not today, not anyday." Audrey was taken back but understood the point and from there stopped picking on others in her class. And the victim learned that she is in control of how she responds to adversity.

There are many other instances of changed hearts built on solid principles of Biblical truth but I will leave you with this. Parents who want their children to grow up with religious instruction to become the best they can be should have your support by passing SB 293.

Sincerely,
Barbara Willis