

Good morning,

Chair Brenner, Vice Chari O'Brien, ranking member Ingram and members of the senate education committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 293. My name is Michael Ralph and I am from Richland County. I can go into many stats that you may read from other testimonies on percentages of Parents want Moral and religious education, how not allowing this pass will give schools the opportunity to deny their requests and how religious instruction can truly benefit students and schools. That would be telling you information you already know about. Instead, I would like to share with you why I truly think this is important. I was one of the very few individuals who had the opportunity to grow into a public school and blessed enough that my parents could afford to pull me out and send me to a private school. Not everyone has that opportunity. My education was no longer just focused on passing assignments and making sure we hit high test scores. It was focused on how to treat others and to expand our faith in God. How that there is a bigger picture to life. People will fight that Church is on Sunday's go to a Sunday school or join a group on the side. Yes, you can join groups and Sunday school. However, it is extremely easy to create excuses because you cannot attend and or put on a face to "pretend". If a student who does not have the opportunity to really see daily the change this kind of education can make, then it will be for nothing. Allowing schools to dictate (public schools at that) who mainly care about test scores and money is doing a disservice to the students and the parents. We should be striving to allow the kids to grow and expand their knowledge and experiences to direct them on their path. Allow parents to make the decision for their kids and let them have a say. As a new parent myself, I would like to have a say in my child's education and was extremely excited for the opportunity for Life Wise.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for Senate Bill 293.

Sincerely,

Michael Ralph