

Chair Brenner,
Vice Chair 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 Melissa Fannon and I am from Franklin County.

I believe it is imperative to preserve the **freedom of choice** for parents concerning Released Time Religious Instruction instituted by the Ohio Supreme Court. By changing "may" to "shall" in the amendment, all school districts would be **required** to allow RTRI for all students, keeping the choice of participation with the parent, not the school boards. Some local school districts here in Franklin County continue to deny that choice to parents who desire their student to attend religious instruction **during school hours**.

Statistics have shown that RTRI positively affects both students and schools with improved student behavior, better grades, and even better mental health all around. SB 293 makes religious education accessible to all students without being a burden to the school or the taxpayer.

As a classroom aide in our Whitehall LifeWise program, I can attest that the majority of the students attending our classes LOVE LifeWise ... and it is more than just "getting out of class"! They are learning that Respect, Reliability, and Responsibility are important character traits in life, as well as Perseverance, Love, Trustworthiness, and many other desirable features.

I believe it is important that all school districts in Ohio allow parents the choice of sending their students to Released Time Religious Instruction during school hours. Please do not allow school boards to deny parents that choice!

Sincerely,
Melissa Fannon
Whitehall, Ohio