

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 Laurie Brown and I am from Franklin County.

I am on the steering committee for Lifewise in Gahanna-Jefferson school district. It was truly a blow when the board of education strategically rescinded Gahanna's RTRI policy just before our committee was to speak with the superintendent and present the case for Lifewise. At the board meeting on October 20, 2022, many proponents gave testimony to the benefits of Lifewise and even asked them to table their vote and take time to consider the testimony, but they went ahead and voted to rescind.

Their reasoning is they didn't want the children to miss any of the other classes, specials or even library time. Yet, we could provide a schedule where the kids would not have to miss any of those classes because we can have Lifewise during lunch and recess. Some schools in our district provide time for Muslim students to pray during the school day and on school property. If this is the case, then Released Time Religious Instruction should not be withheld from the parents and children who want it.

We know from being closely associated with the Whitehall program what an incredible benefit Lifewise has been in the lives of the children there. They look forward to being in this classroom, receiving love and attention from the teachers and volunteers and learning character qualities which benefit both their lives and their behavior at school. This program has a great partnership with Whitehall schools. We want that in Gahanna too.

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

Sincerely, Laurie Brown