

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 Mary McIntosh and I am from Paulding County.

A Supreme Court ruling and Ohio law allows for released time religious classes for public school students. But now that parents are starting to show interest, schools are denying it. This is allowed because of the word "may" in the law. Let's change the word to "shall." Ohio's parents deserve to be allowed to choose whether their children should have religious instruction instead of having that right pulled away from them. Decades of research shows that religious instruction positively affects student behavior, academic performance, and mental health.

By passing SB 293 this legislative session, Ohio can empower parents, enrich students' lives, and strengthen school communities. It's time for Ohio to ensure that parental choice—not school officials—determines access to released time religious instruction.

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

Sincerely,

Mary McIntosh