

Dear 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 Eric Mauter, and I am from Delaware County.

SB 293 matters to Ohio parents and students because there is a desire to protect released time religious instruction. For many parents, access to religious instruction via private schools or homeschooling is simply not an option. A simple interpretation of Ohio Law should *not* empower school officials to take this right away from parents and students.

Released time for religious instruction is a positive experience in 200+ school districts served by Ohio's LifeWise Academy. Parents should have the authority to decide if religious instruction is part of their child's education. Such programs can benefit students' mental health, behavior, and academics, and they are in demand nationwide! Unfortunately, some school districts are blocking these opportunities.

Passing SB 293 this session would empower parents, enhance students' experiences, and support school communities across Ohio. Now is the time for Ohio to ensure that access to released time for religious instruction is determined by parental choice, not by school officials.

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

Sincerely,

Eric Mauter