

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 Alyssa Jones, and I live in Franklin County.

My husband and I have two children in Ohio public schools and valued the choice we had when it came to providing religious instruction during their school hours at their Westerville City School District elementary school. As you may know, the Westerville City School Board rescinded their released time policy this fall. **Because of the school board's decision, our children—along with 300 others in the district—are now prohibited from attending the released time program that is so valuable to our family.**

Released time religious instruction was an important factor in our decision to enroll our kids in public school because of the option to integrate Bible learning into their week with minimal disruption. As their parents, we saw value in a Bible class in place of lunch/recess one hour a week. **We are very discouraged by the school board's radical decision to end our freedom to participate in a released time program.**

About 75% of school districts in Ohio have a released time policy, yet families in cities like Westerville are left out when the school board chooses to restrict the religious freedom of the families it serves. This is why I strongly support SB 239. **This bill will put decision-making where it belongs: in the hands of parents.**

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

Sincerely,
Alyssa Jones