

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 Phillip Fox and I am from Delaware County.

As a parent of two elementary school children who attend Delaware City Schools, I want the option for my children to learn about a religious worldview as part of their school day. Fortunately our school district has a helpful policy that allows this as an option for our family. However, I know other parents in Ohio whose desires for their children's religious education have been blocked by just a few school board members. Those few school board members have denied the desires of hundreds of families in their districts and that doesn't seem right.

One of the biggest objections you'll hear is that released time religious instruction "disrupts" the school day. Released time religious instruction integrates with existing class schedules, meaning there are NO NEW TRANSITIONS created. For example, an entire class is already transitioning to lunch. Some of the students go to the cafeteria while others go to their religious instruction. It's really that simple.

For our family, a religious worldview that provides the basis for morality and character has been incredibly helpful as we endeavor to raise responsible, respectful, healthy, and successful children. Our experience is backed by decades of academic research that demonstrates religious instruction's positive impact on student behavior, academics, and mental health.

Parents know what's best for their children and together families should get to decide whether to include religious instruction in their student's schedule. The Supreme Court made allowance for such instruction, parents want it, and no public money or resources are spent on providing it. Ultimately parents, not school board members, should have the final say about whether their children receive religious instruction.

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

Sincerely,

Phillip Fox