

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 Andrew Norris and I am from Delaware County.

As you know, a Supreme Court ruling and Ohio law allow for released time religious classes for public school students, but a critical flaw exists: school officials can override parents, denying students access to these programs. Many parents who want their children to participate in religious instruction during the school day may face unnecessary roadblocks.

Senate Bill 293 addresses this issue by amending ORC 3313.6022. A simple yet crucial change—from “may” to “shall” would require all school districts to adopt a policy for released time, giving parents, not schools, the ultimate choice to decide if their children can participate.

I feel that it is important for parents to have the authority to decide if religious education is part of their child's schooling, particularly as many lack other options. SB 293 makes religious education accessible to all students, including those in public schools, without burdening the school or taxpayer.

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

Sincerely,

Andrew Norris