

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 Donna Montgomery and I am from Union County.

I am writing to urge you to continue to bring Senate Bill 293 to the forefront. This Bill is a gift to the parents and community. There is NO REASON that the state should deny parents and families this opportunity.

My experience is two-fold. I grew up in a community that allowed for Christian Education. Even though I was also a member of a church, this opportunity reinforced values in my life so they expanded into my lifestyle and peer groups. I fondly recall those days of going across the parking lot to the church and learning with my school peers. I still sing the songs and know the scripture by heart that I memorized through this well-structured Bible Education Opportunity. Participating helped build my self-esteem, confidence, and leadership skills.

Secondly, I am now at a church that hosts LifeWise and everyone is excited that we are able to provide this opportunity. It is a win-win situation. The schools administrators and teachers benefit because the kids return refreshed for the afternoon and good values are taught and reinforced that carry into the classroom. Students and families of course benefit from the content and the discipline that is demonstrated and reinforced. LifeWise is something they "get" to do and they enjoy it. Lastly, the community benefits from the children having a solid foundation of faith, confidence, morals, and leadership skills.

The truth is that we are a country that thrives when we give power and authority to the people ... The education system has been hijacked too long and has suffered. When parents demonstrate they want their children to be given this opportunity, shouldn't the schools give it to them? Allowing children to receive religious education during their free time during school hours ... it really is a win-win. To vote no on this bill would be a vote against parents, communities, the American way, and truth.

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

Sincerely,

Donna Montgomery