

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 Dana Smith and I am from Williams County.

I am a firm believer in the value of released time religious instruction in our state's schools, both from a constitutional standpoint and for the rounded development of our youths. As a volunteer in the Bryan LifeWise Academy program I've seen both the need and the advantage of providing a Christian and moral education to young students, some of whom already have some religious foundation in their lives and some who do not. If parents desire this type of education in addition to ABCs and math, I believe they should have the right to have their children participate in available released-time teaching programs.

The LifeWise program in Bryan has operated successfully for almost two years, with minimal impact to the school's operations. More importantly, many of the school teachers have commented that the LifeWise students in their classes often show improved dispositions and conduct throughout the school days. LifeWise provides additional guidance for personal growth that the school cannot offer.

SB 293 would assure that such programs can function if the parents desire it, and if a viable organization offers released time instruction for students. I hope that this bill will be approved to provide an equal opportunity across the state of Ohio.

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

Sincerely,  
Dana Smith