

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 Sally Dillow and I am from Perry County.

I am **very much** a proponent of SB 293 because being a LifeWise Academy Teacher for the last two years, I see the difference it makes in these kids' lives. So many kids struggle with life's difficulties whether it be no parents in the home due to drugs or incarceration, abuse, or just a sense of not fitting in, our children are struggling with many mental health issues. In today's society and culture, it is so difficult for our children to maneuver and navigate life for themselves, that I am proud to say that we have become a "safe space" and "refuge" for these struggling kids and *all* kids in our area. Many of the kids come in shy and quiet, and they leave each week with such joy and excitement, knowing how much we love and care for them. They feel "seen" and it changes them!

Our Northern Local School District has three schools in the district, we are just one of the many area schools that have the LifeWise Program in over 200+ Ohio school districts. Our parents want it and are making their voices heard. Our parents and school staff are very supportive of what we are doing with their students week after week, and they are excited to see the changes in their child(ren) lives at home and school. There is strong evidence-based research that indicates religious instruction **positively** affects the student's performance and behavior in all participating schools with the LifeWise Program in place.

Parents should have the authority to decide if religious education is part of their child's schooling, particularly as many lack access and money to private religious schools or other homeschooling options. SB 293 makes religious education accessible to all students -if wanted, including those in public schools, without burdening the local school or local taxpayer.

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

Sincerely, Sally Dillow