

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram and member of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 293. My name is Karen Weaver, and I am from Putnam County. I strongly feel that Ohio parents must have the opportunity to choose released time religious instruction (RTRI) for their children in public school, because access to private schools or homeschooling is not available for all.

As an ER nurse, I have seen the escalation of mental health concerns for youth, and RTRI programs can partner with parents to reinforce moral concepts and help students learn that their worth is defined by God and not peers. I am currently involved in a RTRI program in our community, and I am seeing a positive impact on the students. At the end of the last school year, 97% of students in our program said that RTRI helps them make better decisions. RTRI not only helps individual students but also the community as a whole.

Since RTRI is parent-permitted, held off school property, and privately funded, there is no burden to taxpayers. Students are already asking us to provide RTRI in the higher grades by the time they reach them, and I ask your help in ensuring that they have that opportunity. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for Senate Bill 293.

Sincerely,  
Karen Weaver  
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