

Good Afternoon,

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 Statira Petersen and I am from Miami County.

As a foster parent I have seen the tremendous positive impact that religious studies have played in our home. Through organizations like Lifewise our child was able to learn God is always with them. As a foster child it is so important to know that God is always with them no matter the home they go to or wherever they have been. Psalm 23:4 states it best, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Having faith in God gives our child hope, something that people could never provide.

Although we did talk about God at home and went to church, having religious study during the day reinforced the positive messages. He felt free to discuss God with a group of inclusive individuals, something that was lacking in our public schools. As a parent I wanted to provide an opportunity for my child to have that supportive community. I also wanted my child to learn that he could be an overcomer. Lifewise partnered with me to teach these messages.

Parents have a right and a need to have a say in their child's schooling. Parents know their children. Know what will help them or what will hinder them. I have personally witnessed the emotional break of a child because of trauma when a public school didn't partner in the mapping of the child's education. SB 293 is just the first step towards bettering our children's education.

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

Best Regards,

Statira Petersen