

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 Melinda Rogers and I am from Union County. I would like to voice my opinion about the importance of all parents having the opportunity to choose released time religious instruction for their children, grandchildren, etc.

As a community we should be advocating for parents, not local school officials the ability to decide about religious education and whether their children may or may not attend such programs. It is our desire to give every child the ability to attend religious education programs and not have schools stop the progress of this important initiative.

Parents have voiced their opinions and want this choice for their students. We want all children to be given the opportunity – not just in some school districts that choose to partner with our program. We want it for all children – no matter where they attend school. This bill would allow us to offer those programs.

These grass roots type programs are what our nation has been founded on and we want the same opportunities for all students.

These programs have a measurable positive impact on students and schools. Behavior is changing, academics are improving, and mental health is stronger. Students love attending the program with us and with their friends and we desire this for all students in Ohio. You should see the smiles on their faces when the bus pulls up, we load them and head off for a fun lunch period of religious education. We are praying for them, we are praying for their families, we are making an important and positive impact in their little lives. We want that choice afforded to all children – no matter the school district they attend.

Ultimately parents know what is best for their children. There are many times when a parent has to decide something either with or against a school district and really, the parent knows best for their families.

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

Sincerely,

Melinda S. Rogers