

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 Brian Young and I am from Franklin County.

For the past three years, I have had the honor and privilege to be a part of LifeWise Academy as both a driver and, most recently, as a teacher in our middle and high school classes. As such, I have been able to see firsthand the positive impact LifeWise has had on our students. I understand that there are those who disagree with what LifeWise stands for and would like nothing more than to see LifeWise removed from our schools. However, those individuals should not have the power to decide for an entire school district whether students can attend LifeWise.

Whether or not a child attends LifeWise – or any other Released Time program – is a decision that only a child's parents should be able to make. By allowing Part B of Section 3313.6022 to read "may" instead of "shall", the power to choose whether students can attend a LifeWise-type program is left in the hands of school boards/administrators, whose views may or may not represent the views of the parents.

Changing the wording of this Revised Code does not guarantee that a Released Time program will happen in a particular school district. You still must have people willing to do the work necessary to start such a program. But by not changing the wording, you are denying students and their parents the opportunity – and right – to attempt to start such a program.

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

Sincerely,

Brian S Young