

Joshua Ferry

Opposition Testimony SB 293

November 19, 2024

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Joshua Ferry. I am a student at Cleveland State studying political science. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 293 and its companion bill HB 445 in the Ohio House.

According to this bill and its companion bill in the house, the current language regarding Release Time for Religious Instruction (or RTRI) will be changed from “may” to “shall”. This would mean that local school boards would be forced to adopt policies excusing children from school for religious instructions. While I don't have anything against one practicing their religion, there're a lot of redflags with just simply changing one word that have to be addressed

- While many argue that this bill promotes “parental rights”, there is also a liability risk. Students for the most part don't have consent on whether they want to be signed up to do this. The ideologies that some RTRI organizations promote, such as anti-LGBTQ and Christian Nationalist ideologies are the most fringe and extreme ideologies.
- These students are also being taken from courses that are essential to socialization, such as physical education, music, art, library/media literacy, and STEM courses. RTRI programs may also remove students from recess and lunch, sometimes the only time students get to socialize with each other.

- The RTRI this bill caters to what I call lowercase-c christianity. Organizations like the Center for lowercase c christian virtues and the Heritage foundation support the version that these RTRI programs want to indoctrinate our youth with. This program is the equivalent to forcing children to watch Skibidi Toilet, that's how trashy this lowercase c christian is.
- This bill only allows RTRI time for one version of one ideology: There are cities in Ohio with religions other than the lower case c christian, and even the cities with heavy Christian populations are not lower case c christian, many are Catholic or something else. Other communities have a high Jewish or Muslim population, so this won't benefit them at all. Some of these communities would probably benefit from their own RTRI, especially in communities like Parma, Painesville, and Springfield, which host a ton of refugees and/or ethnic minorities. Having an upper case C-Christian or other RTRI would bring some of these niche communities together as they try to adapt to their new lifestyle. Many of these ethnic communities, such as Mexican-Americans have a very communal lifestyle, and tend to be very religious in nature. However, they're not delusional, and would not comply with the lowercase c christian RTRI programs.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this dangerous bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and if you or your office have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at joshf0904@gmail.com

Thank you again,

Josh Ferry