

November 15, 2024

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 Jan Ross and I am from Franklin County. I am a grandparent of children in the Columbus public school system and a volunteer with Lifewise. I have seen the impact the program has on our students, how they love the experience and enjoy their time in the program. I believe it has a positive impact on our student's mental health, behavior and well being. Parents want moral and character education in public schools, Parents should have the authority to decide if religious education is part of their child's schooling,

Many of the arguments against the LifeWise program are false. It does not burden the school or taxpayer as the program is complete funded by LifeWise. The children are leaving school during lunch and recess period so that it is not disruptive to anyone. It is a voluntary program and no student can attend without parental approval.

Because of this, i request that you continue to push forward Senate Bill 293 so that parents can have the choice to have their children participate in released time religious instruction. By passing SB 293 this legislative session, Ohio can empower parents, enrich students' lives, and strengthen school communities. It's time for Ohio to ensure that parental choice—not school officials—determines access to released time religious instruction.

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

Sincerely,

Jan Ross