

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 David Sharp and I am from Madison County. My children attend Jonathan Alder Schools in Plain City. They enjoy attending a Release Time Religious Instruction Program, LifeWise. As a parent, I appreciate the ability to enroll them in such a program during the school day. LifeWise started in Ohio in 2018 in just 2 schools. Today there are over 145 LifeWise programs in Ohio with many more planning to launch. This clearly speaks to the demand for such a program and parents' desire for their children to receive religious instruction.

I was disappointed by recent developments in Westerville, OH that saw a LifeWise program that served 300 students close after 2 years. The local school board determined the program was too "disruptive". While it is unfortunate Westerville Schools lacked the capacity that hundreds of other schools across the country have to allow LifeWise programming, it is not the final answer.

Senate Bill 293 would compel local school districts to allow programs such as LifeWise to exist across the state. My hope is you will consider supporting this bill and do whatever you can advance it to the Governor's desk.

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

Sincerely,

David Sharp  
Plain City, Ohio