

Pam Hogue
11795 Yeary Road
Adamsville, Oh 43802

“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 Pam Hogue and I am from Muskingum County.

I have now participated as a volunteer in the Lifewise program for over 2 years. I have been amazed at the parental support and the student participation in our district. It is clear to me that parents are concerned about the quality of education their children are receiving and are eager to have that education include character traits gleaned from Bible lessons. Just this year alone, our children have had lessons on kindness, attentiveness, being teachable, wholeheartedness, availability, forgiveness and courage. Each lesson has its basis in the truth of a Bible character’s life. These are all traits that contribute to a student’s wellbeing and also to society as a whole. And, yet clearly our school systems do not have the resources, time or legal ability to teach them. Released time Christian education program allows for this to happen. There are statistics and testimonies bearing witness to the fact that religious education positively affects student behavior, academic performance, and mental health. Who doesn’t want that for our children?

Parents should have the authority to decide if they want religious education as a part of their children’s schooling and this authority should not be taken from them simply because a school board or administration does not agree with Christian principles or are afraid of the opposition. This bill makes that education accessible to all students. Remember, this program is completely voluntary. No student or parent is forced to participate—much like band, sports or other school programs. We have seen successful Lifewise programs halted simply because a few parents complained and the school board capitulated. Other programs have been denied start even when there was strong parental and community backing because the administration did not want to participate. This should not happen and this bill would take the decision away from school officials and place it back in the hands of parents where it belongs.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for SB 293. I trust that you will do the right thing.

Sincerely, Pam Hogue