

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 Meredith Pyers and I am from Franklin County. My daughters, Eleanor and Genevieve have enjoyed and benefitted from LifeWise experiences both at the elementary and middle school level over the past few years. This programming, while obviously focused on Biblical teaching, is ultimately recognizing and encouraging character traits reflecting godliness such as kindness, self-control, patience, and other such applications. These lessons would only positively impact the educational environment as they are in-line with what is already being taught and encouraged within the schools as well.

Even though we go to church and have these discussions consistently at home, LifeWise has deepened our children's understanding as well as their Christian community within the school, which has fostered a sense of belonging that I know our school district values and strives to achieve for other student groups.

While I understand the importance of religious freedom as a country and respect legal guidelines that prevent public schools from teaching any one particular religious doctrine, I believe that optional programs funded and operating independently outside of mandatory educational periods should be permitted within the school day for those families that place a high importance on Biblical education. Beyond that, the prevention of any such programming is actually a restriction of religious freedom for us, as a family that does value Christian principles and relationship, and is currently receiving support through LifeWise.

For this reason, I ask that you pass Bill 294 which would change current verbiage allowing this optional opportunity to be restricted impacting existing programs that are thriving.

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

Sincerely,
Meredith Pyers