

Opponent Testimony for S.B. 293

Ohio Senate Education Committee

November 17, 2024

Dear Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, and Esteemed Senate Education Committee Members Louis Blessing, III, Stephen Huffman, Michele Reynolds, and Vernon Sykes:

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Evelyn Cherry (she/her). I am a parent to public school and charter school students and a public library worker as well as the spouse of a public-school teacher. I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 293, which seeks to alter the well-established system of Released Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) by changing the permissive "may" to "shall" in Section [3313.6022](#) of the Ohio Revised Code. I believe this unnecessary bill threatens the autonomy of local school boards and undermines constitutional principles. I urge you to oppose this legislation. It is not the role of the state to make its students vulnerable to corporate interests. If local school boards think their students need an RTRI policy they can establish one on their own. Forcing them to create these policies sets a dangerous precedent for additional demands on our already strained school systems solely to benefit of organizations like Lifewise, making it easier for them to make demands on public schools.

When Section 3313.6022 was codified into law in 2014, the 130th General Assembly wisely chose the language "may" instead of "shall" to give local school boards discretion in permitting RTRI. The permissive language was designed to respect the diverse needs and views of individual communities. This flexible approach allows locally elected school boards to decide what is in the best interest of their students and administration while not mandating schools to accommodate a forced implementation of religious instruction. The current language of the law also reflects the judiciary's preference for protecting local governance from unnecessary state interference.

Please consider my testimony and oppose SB 293. Please leave important decisions about when to adopt policy to the local school boards.

Thank you,

Evelyn Cherry