

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify by email today. My name is James L. Raney, PhD. I am a former elected school board member who represented nearly 1 million residents of Fairfax County, Virginia and who has been a resident of Ohio since 2014. I am strongly opposed to SB 293 and its House counterpart HB 445.

Ohio's legislature should focus on implementing a constitutional school funding plan rather than adding more unfunded requirements to school districts. The fact that school administrators must manage this program means that taxpayer dollars are being used to support religious instruction. Taxpayers in "poor" districts would be hit harder than "rich" districts who can better afford such extraneous demands on administrator time. Districts already have the option of supporting religious instruction if they so choose. Let's not mandate that all districts must do it. Instead, let's focus on teaching reading, writing, math, science, and other life skills required to function in our increasingly complex and technological society.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this ill-advised bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Background from Microsoft Pilot:

The issue of unconstitutional public-school funding in Ohio primarily stems from the landmark case, *DeRolph v. State of Ohio*. Filed in 1991 by a coalition of school districts, the case argued that Ohio's school funding system was inequitable and inadequate.

In 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the state's method of funding public schools was unconstitutional because it failed to provide a "thorough and efficient system of common schools" as required by the Ohio Constitution. The court found that the reliance on property taxes for school funding created significant disparities between wealthy and poor districts. Over the years, the court issued several rulings, urging the state legislature to reform the funding system.

Despite the court's rulings, efforts to overhaul the funding system have faced significant challenges. Lawmakers have introduced various proposals, but comprehensive reform has been elusive. As of recent years, Ohio's school funding system remains a topic of debate, with ongoing discussions about how to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources. The *DeRolph* case has had a lasting impact on the conversation around school funding in Ohio, highlighting the need for a fair and sustainable system that ensures all students have access to quality education.