

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 Sabrina Abell and I am from Franklin County.

I am a proponent for SB293, revision of the bill to state that a school district board of education "shall" adopt a policy that authorizes a student to be excused from school to attend a released time course in religious instruction.

2 1/2 years ago I did not know about Release Time Religious Instruction. I was simply a public school parent, like many, who is loved by and loves Jesus. When our kids were little, we made the prayerful decision to have our kids attend public school when they were school aged and committed to teach them about our Christian faith at home, and by being members of our local church. At the time, I didn't know that the possibility of our children learning about our faith during the public school day was even an option.

Then 2 1/2 years ago, I learned about RTRI and of the RTRI program called LifeWise Academy, currently operating throughout Ohio and many other states. This RTRI program in particular is proving to offer to all children, an educational class that supports them academically, emotionally, mentally & spiritually. I believe that SB293 stating "shall" instead of "may", gives all parents the right to choose a religious class that is right for their child during their child's public school day. This adds value to our families of public school students and therefore makes public school even more valuable for many parents like myself.

Revision of SB293, ensures that the parent or guardian is free to exercise their parental right to have a religious class during the public school day and to choose if it is or isn't right for their child(ren) to attend such a class. Such a choice to determine what is right for the child would lie in the hands of who it should, in the hands of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child, rather than the school district. I believe it is important for parents to have the choice to determine the value they place on their child(ren) being able to attend public school and to have a religious class to attend during the school day that nurtures their child(ren)'s faith. This also gives parents another option which allows for more equity amongst those who may want religious instruction during the school day but who can not afford private/religious schooling.

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

Sincerely,
Sabrina Abell