

11/18/2024

Dear 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 Jessica Cappuzzello and I am from Franklin County.

My three children currently participate in a released time program, and I have been able to see the benefits firsthand. We are fortunate that in our district, we are able to make the choice for our children to participate in released time during the school day while still attending a public school. Passing Senate Bill 293 would allow ALL parents in every district in Ohio to have the opportunity to choose released time religious instruction for their children if they so choose. By not allowing this change, it takes away parental choice and gives only a few people, the chance to decide for an entire community. We have seen districts deny the allowance of and even overturn released time, based on the opinion of a few people on a school board, even though hundreds of families participated in and wanted the program.

The good news is, passing this Bill would allow released time for ANY religion, so it is very inclusive. Also, parents still need to give written permission, so it is every individual family's choice whether they want their children to participate or not. Passing this Bill does not do any harm to the people who oppose it, because they have the power to choose NOT to send their children to a released time program. On the contrary, unless it is passed, there are families who would WANT this for their children but may not have the opportunity if the Bill is not passed. Please consider swiftly passing Senate Bill 293 so that it levels the playing field, and ALL families have the choice to choose released time religious instruction.

The program my children participate in focuses on character attributes like patience, courage, perseverance, and kindness. Don't we all need a little more of that (especially if the parents want it for their children??) Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or if I could provide additional insight on released time programs.

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

Sincerely,

Jessica Cappuzzello

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