

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sara Ziemnik. I am the Ohio History Teacher of the Year and the National History Teacher of the Year (2017) and have been a public school educator in Ohio since 1999. I am a proud product of Ohio public schools and am now raising two children in Ohio public schools. I am strongly opposed to SB 293 and its House counterpart HB 445.

Absenteeism is a huge problem in Ohio public schools post-pandemic. Districts all across the state are trying to help kids make up for the learning loss that occurred. Will school districts and teachers be punished for students who fail to make up coursework they miss? The current law declares that "the student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork," but does not elaborate. What happens if a large percentage of students in a classroom join an available religious release program? Will remaining students be forced to sit in study hall because there aren't enough students to hold a class? Isn't that akin to punishing students for not attending a religious release program?

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

Sincerely,
Sara Ziemnik