

**Opponent Testimony for SB293**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**17 November 2024**  
**Mary Klain**

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

My name is Mary Klain, my pronouns are she/her. I am a lifelong Ohio resident who has raised my 5 children here in Ohio. I am distressed about the trajectory most of the legislation in Ohio is taking. SB293 is one such concerning bill that is currently moving through the Statehouse in this Lame Duck Session.

As I am sure you are aware, SB293 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 strongly oppose this legislation for these reasons:

- Removing some students during the school day is disruptive for the students not participating in the RTRI program, as well as the teachers, and school level administration. These repeated disruptions detract from the high quality instruction all Ohio students are intended to receive;
- Religious education belongs in the hands of parents;
- Threatens the autonomy of local school boards, who are best positioned to understand and address the unique needs of their communities;
- Undermines the constitutional principle of separation of church and state;
- Appears designed to exclusively accommodate the interests of LifeWise Academy, a private religious organization. LifeWise Academy and its leadership have been very open about directly pressuring legislators to change state law, not only in Ohio, but every state in the nation. This coordination between a private entity influencing state legislation and public school governance sets a dangerous precedent and raises significant concerns about the undue influence of corporate interests on public education policy.

This bill is clearly an attack on Ohio's public educational system. If a family wants religious education during the school day for their children, there are plenty of religious schools systems available. This proposed legislation intentionally makes Ohio's public schools inhospitable to anybody who doesn't fall in line with traditional Christianity.

And truly, if you want to do something that would positively impact Ohio's educational opportunities, why are you spending time on this rather than equitably funding Ohio's public schools? Vote NO on SB293,

Mary Klain