

To,

Honorable Senate Members: Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, Member Louis Blessing, III, Member Stephen Huffman, Member Michele Reynolds, Member Vernon Sykes

Subject: Oppose Senate Bill 293 and RTRI policies in general

Dear Senate Members,

I am writing this letter in the capacity of a parent, a psychiatrist, a practicing minority religion (Hindu), academician, religious educator, an intellectual and a concerned citizen of the country of United States. I am a resident of Summit County.

I am writing in all sincerity and best of reasoning to oppose Senate Bill; 293.

My reasons to oppose this bill from passing are as follows:

1. I believe that religious education is important for the moral, psychological and spiritual growth of children. However, it is important to note that religion on the other hand can and has instilled biases and divided the society, communities and nations. I am by no means saying that religions are at fault. However, the way religious education is delivered, taught or practiced and the motivation behind delivering and preaching it in certain ways can be problematic. Both, history and modern times are testimony to this.
2. Religious biases and divisiveness which already exist in schools can get out in the open due to RTRI policies stemming from SB 293. This can lead to increase in peer pressure, conflicts, manipulative behaviors and bullying amongst students in our schools. These are issues that the public schools are already infested with and there is potential for it to get worse.
3. Such RTRI policies will/do take time away from the schools and cause disruption to the work flow with students and teachers alike. It also distracts from more useful classes and activities which are important in shaping a student's overall growth and health. These policies will bring down the overall quality of education in our schools.
4. Every time the student leaves because of RTRI and comes back to school, there are potential threats to the security of the student and to the school from the student upon returning.
5. Such priority to religion via the purported RTRI policies are not going to make our schools safer. We all know from history and current affairs that most wars fought have been over religion and religious differences.
6. Many minority religious institutes or people belonging to minority religions may not have the means to provide transportation and other means to avail these RTRI policies. On the other hand, there could be better funded and politically driven religious organizations that might be able to carry this policy to a greater proportion. This discrepancy itself is breeding grounds for differences, conflicts and disharmony.

7. Conflicts and differences that are seeded in schools through these direct and indirect ways can impact the psychological growth and mental health of innocent minds negatively. All this in the short and long run can lead to worsening drug usage, violence and loss of productivity. All in all, the quality of education which is already a challenge is going to go down in our schools.

8. To learn and practice religion is a choice and not a mandate. Making religion mandatory via direct and indirect means is going to cause and spread disharmony. Religion is a pathway to realize God not a certain doctrine thrust upon people. It is the misuse of religion that has led to much chaos around the world. Being forced to learn a certain religion goes against human rights and the methods that might get incorporated to carry this out is going to be against the very Constitution of this Country.

I am not in opposition of religious education; I am opposing how it is being imparted through unhealthy RTRI policies.

We already have a simple mechanism in place of taking our children to religious classes on Sundays. It worked perfectly for my two high achieving children, one of whom is a young adult and one is a senior in High School. They attended (my Senior High still attends) Sunday classes throughout their childhood. They are both peace loving and healthy productive citizens. They are both great thinkers and academicians, I believe is because they were not pulled in different directions when they were/are in school. And so are many of their friends who have had similar experience with the way religion was taught to them.

Finally, the only religion that there should be is that of truthfulness. Truthfulness is not an opinion, it is not a perspective, neither it is a policy. Truthfulness is about being closer to inner self and being able to answer to that inner self. The way the current RTRI policies are being laid out are confusing, conflicting and distracting the masses from truthfulness.

As a well-wisher and concerned citizen of this country, I oppose Senate Bill 293.

Sincerely,

Kamala Adury, MD