

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 Rachel Pace. I am a middle school librarian in a central Ohio suburban school district and have been teaching in public schools for 13 years. I am strongly opposed to SB 293 and its House counterpart HB 445.

There are no parameters in place for student safety based on the language of this bill. Will there be minimum credentialing for religious leave programs? Can anyone choose to start a program? Do the leaders/employees of the program have to have the same background checks required for school employees and volunteers? Who will be paying for these services? Who is liable for the students during the release time? Who is approving the curriculum for each religious program that students are participating in?

We have stringent policies in place to provide all students with a free, well-rounded, and unbiased education. The separation of church and state is a constitutionally established principle, which extends to schools, as they are considered an "arm of the state." This bill would go against the most fundamental goals of public education.

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