

Congregation Beth Adam
10001 Loveland – Madeira Road
Loveland, Ohio 45140
513-985-0400

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ohio Senate Education Committee

FROM: Congregation Beth Adam, Social Justice Committee – Team Members Sandy Macovei and Jacqueline Goldman

DATE: November 18, 2024

RE: SB 293 – OPPONENT TESTIMONY

To Chair Andrew O. Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O’Brian, Ranking Member Catherine D. Ingram and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present Opponent Testimony on SB 293.

Senate Bill 293 is unnecessary legislation that weakens the Separation of Church and State and unreasonably interferes with local management of academic instruction within our public schools.

By requiring rather than allowing local school districts to permit religious instruction options during the school day, SB 293 expands the presence and influence of religion in Ohio public schools by favoring religious curriculum offerings over management of the local school curriculum. It values religious education as equal to secular education by giving religious views equal or more weight than secular or scientific principles, thereby undermining academic standards. It removes an earlier provision that gives school districts the option to disallow students from leaving school for religious education during the school day.

Families who send their children to public schools expect these institutions to be inclusive in that they accept persons of all religious persuasions (or lack thereof) and do not endorse any individual religion. Such schools are supported by public taxes and assumed to be secular in nature. Requiring school districts to give students school time for religious instruction interferes with the cultivation of an inclusive school community and may influence students to favor certain religious beliefs, or disfavor students who do not participate in outside religious school offerings. In addition, the school community may suffer from lack of meaningful course offerings such as art, music or other electives because of lack of student participation.

For all reasons noted, Congregation Beth Adam asks our elected representatives to oppose Senate Bill 293, and vote **no** on this legislation.

Congregation Beth Adam is a humanist Jewish congregation in Loveland, Ohio. It is celebrating its 44th anniversary in 2024. In addition to our Loveland temple building, Beth Adam has a vibrant online community with national and international participants. Our Founding Rabbi, Robert Barr, is a noted leader in contemporary Jewish thought. Congregation Beth Adam advocates for religious tolerance and understanding by supporting the constitutionally mandated principle of Separation of Church and State.