

Opponent Testimony for S.B. 293
Ohio Senate Education Committee
November 17, 2024

[Katherine Milani, School-Based Psychotherapist]

Members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Katherine Milani. I am a concerned parent and practicing school-based psychotherapist. I am writing to express my opposition to S.B. 293 which 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 believe this unnecessary bill threatens the autonomy of local school boards and undermines constitutional principles. I urge you to oppose this legislation for several key reasons:

- The needs, cultures, and restrictions in school districts across Ohio are distinct and we must allow our elected school boards to advocate for the needs of their community without requiring a policy that could cause divisiveness, disruption, and/or discrimination.
- As a parent of two elementary students in Revere local schools and a practicing school-based psychotherapist in Medina city schools, I am concerned about the effects RTRI policies and programs may have on school communities. While I respect religious freedom, I believe this policy allows groups (like Life Wise Academy) to infringe on students' rights to a secular education in public schools.

When Section 3313.6022 was codified into law in 2014, the 130th General Assembly wisely chose the language “may” instead of “shall” to give local school boards discretion in permitting RTRI. The permissive language was designed to respect the diverse needs and views of individual communities. This flexible approach allows locally elected school boards to decide what is in the best interest of their students and administration while not mandating schools to accommodate a forced implementation of religious instruction. The current language of the law also reflects the judiciary’s preference for protecting local governance from unnecessary state interference.

Please consider my testimony and oppose S.B. 293. Please leave important decisions about when to adopt policy to the local school boards.