

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify in written form only. My name is Mike Halaiko. I am a retired Ohio Public School Educator, with over 40 years of service as a high school teacher, administrator, and a coach. I am strongly opposed to SB 293 and its House counterpart HB 445.

Here are a few reasons that I am opposed to these bills:

- 1) There are no minimum qualifications or credentialing for religious release programs. What will prevent anyone from simply starting a "religious release" program and use it to remove kids from school during the day? Will this be different district to district?
- 2) What are the safety measures in place that exist for all employees of Ohio Public Schools (i.e. How can we be sure the religious release time program leaders do not have criminal records / will keep our kids safe)? Will this be different district to district?
- 3) In short, The Ohio Constitution, which closely parallels the Federal Constitution does not allow for any state sponsored religion. Our First Amendment right states that we can freely practice any religion we want or no religion at all. Unless you are providing a class in the study of all religions, you are encouraging the practice of one particular religion, and that is a clear violation of everyone's First Amendment right.

I ask you to consider my testimony and urge you to vote NO on this un-American bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in writing.

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