

**Ohio Senate Education Committee  
Opposition Testimony  
Senate Bill 293  
November 19, 2024**

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

My name is Sue Miller.

When family members ask why I am doing this, especially in light of the deck being stacked against so many of us. I tell them it is because I still have faith. I have faith that these hearings actually mean something and that what citizens like me have to say matters to you.

I am a substitute teacher. I teach across many central Ohio public school districts and grade levels. Our teachers and Administrators are struggling. They are scared, and leaving the vocation in higher numbers than those coming into the profession. The data doesn't lie. It is bills like this that have them scared. I know this. I've heard it in teacher lounges, lunchrooms and offices, in Hilliard, in Worthington, in Westerville, at Metro School, at Olentangy, in Dublin and yes, even in Upper Arlington

I believe it is the job of the State and this Education Committee specifically to do everything they can to protect our school children, and secondly to make sure to support our public school teachers and administrators so that they have the authority and power as local elected officials to do what they were elected to do- support ALL public school children and to keep them safe from outside influences. Please don't hamstring them. You will see that the current policy is working. Some districts have elected to allow release time for religious instruction, and some have not- its according to the needs and conditions unique to their districts-such as curriculum, bell schedule, assemblies and such. That is why there are LOCAL school boards and public schools are not under the total control of the State.

Please see RTRI as it was intended- a way to accommodate the non-christian students and their families who did not and do not observe the christian holidays (Christmas, Easter, etc). It was passed to allow PARENTS or trusted caregivers to sign their kids out for things like catechism, bat mitzvah or other holy events that they observe. It is fair and it is working. I have spoken to education attorneys, constitutional scholars and parents. This is not about LifeWise Academy. They are merely a symptom of an underlying issue and that is the belief of a few that public education ought to be privatized and that their particular brand of religion is "character education". All you have to do is consider that the founder of LifeWise's book is called DURING SCHOOL HOURS. Please trust me when I say that a VERY SMALL minority of people, meeting in a church basement with VERY good funding, do not represent the majority and have too big of a seat at the table.

Please look at the bigger picture here. We know organizations such as LifeWise are DIRECTLY tied to Project 2025. They either receive funding or donate to the likes of the Herzog Foundation, Mom's For Liberty and certainly the Southern Baptist Convention.

This isn't about LifeWise. This isn't even about religion. Its about Christian Nationalism. It's no secret that this program's focus is elementary school kids. Never was that more apparent to me than when I was watching Bluey a couple weeks ago with my 5 year old grandson Jack and a commercial came on and he turned to me and said "Grandma, that Sherrod Brown is a bad guy".

Please think about the bigger picture being sold as "parent choice" and what choices kids in rural districts have or what real choices the underprivileged have when competition will make the very few private schools (that don't outperform public schools in over 90% of the districts where both operate) out of reach for most families.

From every part of my being, I hope and pray (yes pray) that you will vote with your conscience and recite your oath of office in your head before doing so.

I respect the job that you do, it can't be easy, and I thank you for doing more than just talking the talk. You are walking the walk.

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