

Opponent Testimony for S.B. 293

Ohio Senate Education Committee

November 15, 2024

Dear Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, and Esteemed Senate Education Committee Members Louis Blessing, III, Stephen Huffman, Michele Reynolds, and Vernon Sykes:

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. My name is Katie Hofacker, she/her.. I am a parent of a 13 year old in Worthington City Schools. I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 293, to express my opposition to SB 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.** I urge you to oppose this legislation for several key reasons.

I have read the propaganda put out by this group, and in it, they condemn people from the LGBTQ+ group, divorced parents, parents who may be cohabitating with a partner rather than married, and the use of preferred pronouns for others.

I am concerned that views such as these are being taught to our children, who are indeed at impressionable ages. I strive to teach my son acceptance and compassion, and the teachings of this group are working directly against those principles. I am appalled that public schools are being used to source children for this program which is based in religion.

The U.S. Supreme Court's rulings in [Zorach v. Clauson](#) and [McCullum v. Board of Education](#) highlight the dangers of religious entanglement in public education and underscore the importance of schools maintaining neutrality toward religion. The entanglement between public education and religious instruction is dangerous. It also undermines the secular purpose of public schooling. The courts have repeatedly affirmed that public schools must remain neutral on religious matters, ensuring that

students are free from coercion or implied endorsement of any religious beliefs.

Moreover, McCollum in particular emphasized that state-sponsored religious programs that occur within public school systems can create an appearance of endorsement, which is unconstitutional. Forcing schools to accommodate RTRI in a mandatory way risks crossing this line, creating legal vulnerabilities for districts statewide.

In summary, SB 293 is an unnecessary and potentially harmful piece of legislation. It threatens local control, violates constitutional principles, and risks undermining the quality of education in Ohio's public schools. I urge you to protect the integrity of our education system and oppose SB 293.

Respectfully,

Ila Catherine (Katie) Hofacker