

**Opponent Testimony for S.B. 293**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**November 19, 2024**

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. My name is Nicholas Sullivan. I am a father of 3 young children who attend public school in a very small, very rural community. I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 293, to express my opposition to S.B. 293, which seeks to alter the current state law regarding school policies about Released Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) in Section [3313.6022](#) of the Ohio Revised Code. I urge you to not only oppose this language change, but in fact make additional revisions with more restrictive and clarifying language.

Instead of passing legal mandates requiring schools to accommodate religious lessons, the committee should be proposing measures that help strengthen the wall of separation as our founding fathers emphatically warned us to do. Is it any coincidence the two states with the most long running & widely successful RTRI programs also have some of the most extensive state guidelines? New York and Utah, as well as other states, have set forth and codified very clear boundaries and restrictions in order to protect the liberty of all students while also accommodating parental choice.

Although the policy adoption itself should remain optional with the current "may" language, the law must be revised so the requirements of that optional policy include restrictions seen in other states' laws such as:

- Schools must plan carefully for those students who do not participate in the released time program, and must ensure that educationally significant programs are provided for them
- Schools must ensure that solicitation of students for participation in released time programs for religious instruction does not take place on or near school facilities.
- No announcements of any kind regarding released time programs will be made in school.
- A public school class schedule or course catalog may not include a released-time class by name.
- A public school publication may not include pictures, reports, or records of released-time classes.
- A public school may not connect bells, telephones, computers or other devices between public school buildings and institutions offering religious instruction, except as a convenience to the public school in the operation of its own programs.

I guess asking for more regulations and restrictions may be a bit of a stretch considering the current law isn't even being enforced. Attorney General Yost has no problem speaking out in support of organizations like LifeWise Academy but his office is strangely silent when presented with evidence that LifeWise is in fact providing RTRI on school property in some districts and in others schools releasing students during core classes. Why are these school districts not being held accountable? Why are they not being made to change operations to be in compliance with Section [3313.6022](#) of the Ohio Revised Code? Why was LifeWise not penalized when it was made evident by the events in Westerville, as well as changes made in their own policy, that their organization had been assuming no liability as the ORC clearly states they must.

This committee should worry about oversight in RTRI and school accountability instead of forcing schools to bend a knee to Christian Nationalism.

Nicholas Sullivan