

Testimony Against SB 293

Senate Education Committee

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 giving me this opportunity to submit my testimony today. My name is Nusrat Mehdi. I am a mother to a public school student and an educator for the last 13 years. I am writing to oppose SB 293..

I am writing to oppose this bill as someone who works as an art educator and is worried about how this bill will encroach upon the time allotted to specialized subjects. I am also alarmed by the government mandating a public school to include religious instruction time during the school time. As Ohioans everyone has the right to practice their preferred faith but the government should have no business in mandating a time taken away from taxpayers funded public schools. This bill also doesn't prioritize the safety of our students.

The bill states that the students will not be taken out of their core classes; this leaves specialized subjects or recess and lunch as only time available for RTRI. These subjects are extremely important for children to grow into healthy, well rounded and responsible adults and citizens of this country. Even if this program is limited to lunch and recess, the students need that time to socialize. This social time is important for whole child learning. This bill is not educationally sound and doesn't safeguard the interests of our students.

I am concerned that this bill does not specify any minimum qualifications or credentialing for individuals/organizations utilizing this time. Can any person simply start a program to use this time to remove students from school? This bill does not put any safety measures in place to protect our students from exploitative organizations and individuals. Again this bill doesn't prioritize the safety and educational needs of our students.

The current RTRI policy is working well in the school district I reside in, Berea City schools. The current policy allows the parents/ guardians to use RTRI when needed. The current RTRI policy works for parents and families and doesn't need to be amended.

I urge you to oppose SB 293 as it goes against the educational needs of our students, threatens local control and dilutes the principle of separation of church and state.

Thank you
Nusrat Mehdi