

Dear Education Committee,

I am writing to you in opposition of Senate Bill 293. As an educator I find it confounding that you would consider shortening the school day to allow time for some children to leave the building for religious instruction.

Following the pandemic, all we heard was how much the children in this state were harmed academically by not being in school and that loss has not dramatically changed after 2 and 3 years. So how does shortening the school day address student learning even if there wasn't a loss? And won't shortening the school day incur more loss? This bill will also allow one group of parents to dictate the amount of educational instruction time ALL students receive, because elementary and middle school educators know that they cannot move instruction forward when a group of students have been excused to leave the building. How is that democratic? You may say that the "other group of parents" have been doing that for decades. I strongly disagree with that stance as religious education has not been part of public school curriculum in my lifetime or my mother's lifetime (she's 102 years old). NOTHING prevents any parent from finding religious instruction outside of the school day in the same way they find gymnastics instruction and dance instruction and batting instruction outside of the school day.

In my opinion, this bill is about teaching and learning time in public schools. Passing Senate Bill 293 compromises that commodity for ALL students. Please defeat this harmful and undemocratic bill.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gordon