

Opponent Testimony for S.B. 293
Senate Education Committee

November 18, 2024

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

I am testifying in opposition to State Bill 293 and to urge you to vote NO on this bill. My name is Brittany Hulbert. I am a parent living in central Ohio, a product of Ohio's public schools, and a graduate of The Ohio State University. As a dedicated advocate for education, both for my family and for all Ohio children, I believe S.B. 293 threatens the quality and autonomy of our state's public education system.

It is in the best interest of our students to uphold the current legislation, which protects local governance. School districts should retain the freedom to decide for themselves whether to allow Release Time for Religious Instruction (RTRI) based on their unique community needs and values. S.B. 293 would take away that local choice, imposing a one-size-fits-all mandate across the state.

Mandating an RTRI policy for all school districts disregards each district's unique needs and disrupts the educational environment. For Ohio to continue thriving as a leader in workforce innovation and economic stability, public education must remain strong and undisturbed. Requiring districts to accommodate non-academic, third-party organizations during school hours undermines our schools' focus and threatens the quality of education that is essential to Ohio's future success.

Some proponents of this bill argue that not requiring all school districts to allow RTRI infringes on the religious freedom of parents and children. However, this claim does not hold up. Students can already observe their religion privately during school or participate in extracurricular religious activities outside school hours, such as Bible clubs and Christian youth groups. Many choose to do so without issue. Parents who prioritize religious education can still support their children's faith through worship or other activities outside the school day. There is no compelling reason to include religious instruction in the public school day.

The existing law on this matter honors the independence of our districts and minimizes unnecessary state interference. It does not, in any way, violate a parent or student's religious freedom. By voting "no" on S.B. 293, you will be supporting local control and allowing

communities to make their own decisions based on what's best for them. I strongly urge you to support Ohio's school districts and freedom by voting "no" on SB. 293.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Sincerely,

Brittany Hulbert

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