

Senator Brenner,

I am very concerned about religious organizations infiltrating into our public schools. I grew up going to private school. My parents thought religious education was important so they sacrificed to pay tuition. For example, as a family we camped during vacation instead of staying in resorts and hotels. Our eating out was minimal. My mom took on a part-time job. I see no reason a public school education day should be interrupted by an religious organization that can hold their classes after school, evening or weekends.

My husband & I sent our children to public schools. Our children did music, athletics, dance, volunteer and jobs out of school hours.

They all turned out to be wonderful adults with good job, families and good morals.

Please answer the following questions:

Questions HB 445 & SB 293 fail to answer:

- **Will school districts and teachers be punished for students who fail to make up coursework they miss?**
 - Current law declares that “the student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork,” but does not elaborate.
- **Will school report cards reflect the grades of religious release students who fail to make up work?**
 - Current law declares that “the student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork,” but does not elaborate
- **Will there be any minimum qualifications or credentialing for religious release programs?**
 - Can any person simply start a small religious release program and use it to remove kids from school during the day?
 - Will this be different district to district?
- **Will there be any safety measures in place?**
 - How can we be sure the religious release time program leaders do not have criminal records / will keep our kids safe?
 - Will this be different district to district?
- Ohio law says the child’s school isn’t liable for injury arising during transportation to or from a release program when private transport is used, **but who IS liable? Are we doing anything to make sure students are protected?**
 - Will religious release programs have epi-pens on site? A defibrillator?

- Who ensures religious release program leaders don't give out treats containing nuts and allergens?
- What is the policy if a student gets sick while attending a religious release program?
- Public schools have to require any volunteer in their buildings to pay for BCI and FBI checks. **Will religious release program directors, staff, and volunteers be able to bypass the background check requirements?**
- **Will programs like LifeWise be permitted (in some districts) to send kids back to school with candy, toys, presents, and other incentives** to make their classmates jealous and increase enrollment in religious release programs?
- **Will programs like LifeWise be permitted (in some districts) to take kids to amusement parks, zoos, arcades, etc. during the school day** and then send them back to school to make their classmates jealous and increase enrollment in religious release programs?
- **Will students (in some districts) be required to attend a religious release program if parents sign a release for them to go but they don't want to go?**
- **Parents will have to sign a consent form — but how much information is it required to provide?**
 - Will parents even know what they're consenting to?
- **Will religious release programs (in some districts) have limitless authority to focus on politically motivated content that is potentially harmful to students?**
 - Anti-LGBTQ content
 - Content explicitly supporting or opposing certain political candidates or political issues
 - Etc.
- **Will individual school districts be permitted to require religious release programs to represent certain religions?**
 - Example: Christian religious release programs only
- **Will individual school districts be permitted to ban religious release programs from representing certain religions?**
 - Example: No Muslim religious release programs allowed in our district
- **What happens if a nontraditional religion wants to bring a religious release program into some districts?**
 - Church of Wicca
 - Neo-Paganism
 - Satanic Temple
 - New Age
 - Jehovah's Witnesses
 - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
 - American Witchcraft

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will religious release programs have leeway to start funneling funding away from public schools for counseling, after-school programs, tutoring, or other “services provided” that are not specifically the release program? • What happens if a large percentage of students in a classroom join an available religious release program? We’ve heard stories of the remaining students being forced to sit in study hall because there aren’t enough students to hold an art or music class. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isn’t that akin to punishing students for not attending a religious release program? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current law states that students cannot leave school during a core curriculum class in order to attend a religious release program, but does not appear to define core curriculum. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could students miss library time each week? Gym? Music? Art? Reading? • Could an amendment be added to this bill to ensure students ONLY miss lunch and/or recess — and require the religious release program to feed them? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We’ve heard lots of stories about students leaving for their religious release program during a non-core curriculum period (such as lunch or recess), but not returning until the middle of a core curriculum class. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means the entire class is disrupted and all students get distracted. It also means the religious release program students miss major pieces of core curriculum. • Could an amendment be added to this bill penalizing religious release programs that violate the law by failing to return students on time? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor Dewine has been promoting research showing that 1.) if a student momentarily views their cell phone, it takes 20 minutes for that student’s distraction to wane, and 2.) If a student picks up a cell phone and interacts with it, it takes 50 minutes for that student’s distraction to wane. Doesn’t that mean that leaving for a religious release program will distract students for the entire day? • Even if these programs are actually taking place exclusively during specialized/elective time, isn’t that also a problem? Should we be further limiting subjects like art, PE, music, or library/media that help children grow into healthy, well-rounded adults? • Even if these programs are actually taking place exclusively during lunch and recess, isn’t that also a problem? Recess and social time are central to whole child learning. Students attending religious release programs could end up missing out on this vital social time entirely — therefore missing opportunities to play and grow with their peers. | |

- It seems likely that the recruitment strategies used by RTRI programs would lead to strained student relationships and tensions between students who attend the program and those who do not. **Isn't it counterproductive to be creating additional social / interpersonal barriers in our classrooms?**

Seems to me, way too many answers have not been given in order to advance these bills.