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Opposition testimony against SB 293

A B I L L To amend section 3313.6022 of the Revised Code regarding school district policies for released time courses in religious instruction.

I am a retired educator, grandmother and devout Christian. I adamantly oppose SB 293 and urge you to permanently remove this bill from the committee agenda. It is common knowledge that this legislation is proposed solely to support the indoctrination efforts of LifeWise Academy.

I see the struggles my grandchildren and their peers have in their daily school lives. Removing them from the classroom during the regular school day would negatively disrupt not only their lives, but also their classmates. SB 293 devalues education by offering "classes" during scheduled school day. Students often lose instructional time because LifeWise takes place during "specials" or "encore" classes like library, music, physical education, or art classes. At times, LifeWise has claimed it operates during lunch and recess, but their goal is to become part of the school's specials classes rotation.

Our own 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?

Ultimately, this legislation has serious implications for the separation of church and state, which is enshrined in the very first freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." The Supreme Court has also ruled that the 14th Amendment (ratified in 1868) **requires states to guarantee fundamental rights such as the First Amendment's prohibition against the establishment of religion**. This means that states, like the federal government, can "make no law respecting the establishment of religion." As Ohioans and Americans, everyone has a right to practice their preferred faith. But **no one** has the right to push their faith onto someone else's child in a public, taxpayer funded school. Will individual school districts be permitted to require religious release programs to represent certain religions, i.e. Christian programs only? Will districts ban programs representing certain religions, i.e. Muslim programs? This is not covered in the proposed

legislation. SB 293 attempts to establish a Christian nationalist “religion” and agenda that has no place in our public schools.

Oppose and remove SB 293.