

November 15, 2024

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 293. My name is Rick Snider and I am from Montgomery County.

Seventy six percent of voters support moral and character education for public school students. Parents in hundreds of school districts have advocated for released time programs to meet this need. In Ohio we have such a program called LifeWise Academy which is a new program that is expanding rapidly throughout the state and exists in over 200 districts. Parents' rights are under threat and some districts have denied access to a released time for students to have an opportunity to participate in religious instruction. Religious instruction positively impacts students and the schools they attend. A recent independent study by Thomas P. Miller and Associates found the LifeWise programs improve attendance and behavior in participating schools.

Parents should have choice and the authority to decide if religious education is part of their child's schooling. SB 293 makes religious education accessible to all students, including those in public schools, without burdening the school or the taxpayer. By passing SB 293, this session, Ohio can empower parents as well as enrich the students' lives and strengthen schools and communities. Ohio needs to ensure that parental choice, not school officials, determine access to released time for religious instruction, which instills morals and values for our children.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for Senate Bill 293.

Sincerely, Rick Snider