

**Opponent Testimony for S.B 293**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**November 17, 2024**  
**Sarah Kienitz, Commercial Underwriter**

Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. My name is Sarah Kienitz (she/her). I am a parent of 2 children about to enter the Hilliard City school system. I am testifying in opposition to House Bill 445, to express my opposition to SB 293, which seeks to alter the well-established system of Released Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) by changing the permissive "may" to "shall" in Section [3313.6022](#) of the Ohio Revised Code. I believe this unnecessary bill threatens the autonomy of local school boards. I urge you to oppose this legislation for several key reasons.

I worry the secular nature of schools which allows students of all religions, beliefs, and creeds to learn together is going to be threatened if this language changes on a state level. Each school board is elected by their communities and they should be the deciding factor of what should enter their district.

The U.S. Supreme Court's rulings in [Zorach v. Clauson](#) and [McCormick v. Board of Education](#) highlight the dangers of religious entanglement in public education and underscore the importance of schools maintaining neutrality toward religion. The entanglement between public education and religious instruction is dangerous. It also undermines the secular purpose of public schooling. The courts have repeatedly affirmed that public schools must remain neutral on religious matters, ensuring that students are free from coercion or implied endorsement of any religious beliefs.

Moreover, McCormick in particular emphasized that state-sponsored religious programs that occur within public school systems can create an appearance of endorsement, which is unconstitutional. Forcing schools to accommodate RTRI in a mandatory way risks crossing this line, creating legal vulnerabilities for districts statewide.

In summary, HB 445 is an unnecessary and potentially harmful piece of legislation. It threatens local control, violates constitutional principles, and risks undermining the quality of education in Ohio's public schools. I urge you to protect the integrity of our education system and oppose HB 445.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony,

Sarah Kienitz  
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