

11.18.24

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 Ron Rittichier and I am from Franklin County.

I strongly believe that parents should have the option to enroll their children in a release time religious instruction program. Many families desire such training for their children but cannot afford a private school option. Senate Bill 293 opens the door for parents to instill additional religious training in their child while maintaining positive relationships within the local school.

We are seeing more and more mental health issues, problems with self-esteem, suicidal ideation and the degradation of the traditional family unit. Many of these issues are beyond the resources and skills of the local school district. A partnership with the faith community to bring students and families a message of hope has been taken away from the public arena.

Allowing released time religious education as part of the fabric of a community will create opportunity for the dial of the problems noted to be reversed by providing a hope that schools are banned from doing but permitted under the SCOTUS ruling *Zorach v. Claiborn* 1952.

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

Sincerely,

Ron Rittichier