

Opponent Testimony for SB 293

Senate Education Committee

November 18, 2024

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

My name is Megan Bettelon and I am writing to oppose SB 293. I am a parent with children attending an Ohio public school district. I am concerned about this bill requiring that school districts create a plan allowing for released time for religious instruction. This is a decision that should be left to the school districts and the board members that were elected to represent the needs of the specific district.

SB 293 would not set any safety or instructional parameters for the release of students during the day. It does not establish any safeguards that would protect students while they are released into the care of non-school employees. It does not require background checks or any licenses which would put the safety of our students at risk and does not establish emergency/safety plans for when the students are off campus. Furthermore, it does not address how students will make up the instructional time they are missing.

Allowing for transportation during the school day for large groups of students also would disrupt the schedule of the whole school, impacting even the students that opted out of the program and keeping them from the education that they are entitled to receive.

Additionally, the large RTRI program that is currently operating in the state of Ohio has been known to use peer to peer recruitment tactics to try to encourage participation. This could lead to students who do not believe in the specific religious traditions of the program to feel excluded or bullied. Our schools should be a safe place for all students to attend and they should not have to worry about being condemned or excluded for any reason.

For these reasons I am opposed to this bill and ask that you do not allow it to progress further. Thank you for your time