

November 18, 2024

Ohio Senate Education Committee  
Ohio Senate  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, OH. 43215

Esteemed Committee Members,

I'm writing today regarding Release Time for Religious Instruction (RTRI). As a retired teacher and school counselor in public education for over 36 years, I am deeply concerned for school districts, teachers, families, and students. Governance regarding RTRI is best left to each unique school district and its governing Board. Similarly, parenting is the responsibility of each family.

In a country that resoundingly voiced ideals for smaller government in our most recent elections, adding mandates for individual school districts is glaringly contrary. Current Ohio law states school districts "may" adopt policy for release time for religious studies. Is "shall" worth the cost and time to this Ohio House, School Boards, and Ohio tax payers? Has it been made inherently clear to participating parents that when students are taken off campus there are no teacher certifications, Bureau of Criminal Investigation checks, school nurse, or school liability for transportation that follow the student? Are families of religions other than the specifically offered program made aware that they too have this opportunity? Are teachers respected for the enormous responsibility they are awarded in educating our youth, or mindlessly handed another disruption and management task in the school day?

Ohio Congress must take responsibility for allowing educational institutions to teach. Teachers in public schools confront complex societal issues on a daily basis, and we must support schools in providing an atmosphere that promotes learning. Where there is existing law separating church and State, it is up to politicians to keep politics out of schools. Alternatively, families can elect to send children to parochial schools or attend church. Our children are not pawns in a game but our most precious resource.

Let's allow families to parent and teachers to teach!

Mara Lance

Retired educator