

Opponent Testimony for S.B. 293
Senate Education Committee
November 18, 2024

Kathryn Lecklider, Parent

and Dublin, Ohio resident

Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram,
Member Louis Blessing, III, Member Stephen Huffman, Member Michele Reynolds, Member
Vernon Sykes

Thank you for allowing me to provide my input. I care deeply about the quality and rigor of public education in Ohio as well as the upcoming public education of my children. I am writing 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 and undermines the autonomy

and established local control of our duly elected Ohio school boards. I urge you to oppose this legislation for the following reasons:

Additionally, locally elected school boards best understand the varied demographics of their individual communities and are best positioned to work together with and unify those groups within the school community to ensure every student learns to their highest potential and feels valued, welcome and safe. Local school boards are most qualified to decide if a private religious program during the public school day adds value to their particular school community or causes division, disruption, othering of students not participating or outright bullying as we have already seen repeatedly in school districts with programs such as Lifewise Academy. Locally elected school boards need to continue to have the power to make the best, locally informed decisions for their electorate. S.B. 293 will usurp that important local authority and I respectfully ask you to oppose it.

When Section 3313.6022 was codified into law in 2014, the 130th General Assembly wisely chose the language "may" instead of "shall" to give local school boards discretion in permitting RTRI. The permissive language was designed to respect the diverse needs and views of individual communities. This flexible approach allows locally elected school boards to decide what is in the best interest of their students and administration while not mandating schools to accommodate a forced implementation of religious instruction. The current language of the law also reflects the judiciary's preference for protecting local governance from unnecessary state interference.

Please consider my testimony and oppose S.B. 293. Please leave important decisions about when to adopt policy to the local school boards.

