

Opponent Testimony for S.B. 293
Ohio Senate Education Committee

November 15, 2024

Dear Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Sandra O'Brien, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, and Esteemed Senate Education Committee Members Louis Blessing, III, Stephen Huffman, Michele Reynolds, and Vernon Sykes:

Thank you for reading my testimony today. My name is Nancy Maureen Paulett. I am a resident of Revere Local School District, along with a wife and mother of alumni and grandmother of current students. I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 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 and undermines constitutional principles. I urge you to oppose this legislation for several key reasons.

I have seen how effectively Revere School District has allowed "religious" groups to be a part of their after school extra curricular activities. I have known of students who have belonged to this group or groups and have been very positive about their involvement. It did not require having to leave school during the school day. In the Revere School district, there is a great interfaith community of people who respect each other for their beliefs and still are able to practice their own without outside influence.

My concern for the impact on our community if this bill were to pass, is that the respect for others' beliefs will now place a bias against students of different religions. There are already signs of this type of thing occurring because of those who have expressed their own religious views and belittled others with different views. This is not acceptable.

For the past decade, RTRI programs have operated without significant issues under the current law. This balanced approach has allowed parents who wish for their children to participate in religious instruction the opportunity to do so while maintaining the integrity of public education. There is no evidence of systemic issues requiring legislative correction. The success of the existing RTRI framework demonstrates that the proposed changes are unnecessary, which is evident by the fact that according to [School Ministries Ohio](#), over 60% of all districts have a policy. In summary, SB 293 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 SB 293. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

Nancy Maureen Paulett