

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 293
Senate Education Committee

Matina Bliss, Columbus, OH 43203

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on this matter. My name is Matina Bliss, I am a resident of Columbus Ohio residing zip code 43203. I am an active member of my community and volunteer with several organizations in the Columbus area and work professionally in education policy. I am writing in opposition to SB 293.

Senate Bill 293 is both unnecessary and dangerous for Ohio. Under current Ohio law, (ORC 3313.6022), school districts have the option to adopt an RTRI policy. There is no reason this should change. This bill changes one word of the Ohio Revised Code, requiring school districts to adopt a policy. Our districts and their governing boards are perfectly capable of determining what is best for their district's students and their community. AB 293 ultimately tells Ohioans and local school boards that state legislators do not trust them or their ability to create policies. This bill can be interpreted as state overhaul of local government.

Additionally, SB 293 is being pushed for by one single religious nonprofit, LifeWise Academy. Parents and families have the option to send their children to religious schools or have them participate in afterschool religious programs. Yet, LifeWise is working diligently to ensure that the bible and extremist Christian ideology is taught to public school kids during school hours while those kids should be outside playing with their peers, learning a new instrument, or participating in art and physical education class. Numerous issues have come to light around LifeWise programming. Some of these issues were severe enough that school boards have either rescinded or considered rescinding their RTRI policy. SB 293 would force districts to bring back a policy that was harmful and disruptive to their students.

SB 293 is unnecessary and dangerous for Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Matina Bliss