

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

Please find below and attached my testimony opposing SB 293. I would love a confirmation of receipt. Thank you!

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Lisa Gonzalez Bramhall. I am a mother, former Executive Director and board member of Save Our Children, an after-school program for disadvantaged youth, and an active member of the community of the City of Elyria, located in Lorain County, Ohio. I am strongly opposed to SB 293 and its House counterpart HB 445.

Here are some of my concerns:

The Ohio Department of Education gave the City of Elyria a 2.5 out of 5 on their performance index. Elyria is an urban community with over 30% of children in the community living in poverty. I continue to hear from teachers throughout all the surrounding districts that students have already fallen significantly behind and have never caught up after the impacts of Covid. As someone who focused on creating supplemental programming for children to improve literacy and promote academic excellence, the absolute last thing our students in the State of Ohio need is to be pulled out of school when they are behind and still haven't caught up academically.

Additionally, as residents of Ohio and citizens of the U.S., individuals have the freedom to exercise their chosen religion. No one should have the authority to impose their religious beliefs on other people or other people's children within a public-school setting and create a genuinely divisive environment among children who participate and do not participate, since not every child will be afforded the opportunity to leave school to participate in programs for their own specific faith. 2. SB 293 does nothing to prevent students from being drawn into religious release programs with obvious political agendas. It also does nothing to protect students while they're in someone else's care — background checks, criminal background checks, licenses, etc. This presents an unsafe environment for children. It also doesn't address if a child gets sick or has an allergy in their care and how to address those things. 3. It declares that "the student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork" but does not elaborate on how children who are already struggling will ever make up this schoolwork and how this will negatively impact their grades. 4. This bill limits instructional time for specialized/elective subjects like art, PE, music, or library/media. These are already limited, yet so necessary to help build creativity and problem-solving in children instead of just teaching to a test. As a mother, I can attest that these activities were extremely important in shaping the education of my two children, and I have deep concerns about the future of Ohio students should this irresponsible bill that is not in the best interest of children be passed.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful, dangerous, and un-American bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. Please let me know that you have received my testimony and keep me posted on the outcome. Feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Best,

Lisa Gonzalez Bramhall