

November 18, 2024

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 293. My name is Julie Bowers, and I am from Delaware County.

Please allow me to express my full support of SB293. We are in a critical time in America where parents rights are being challenged in unsuspecting and unreasonable ways! Some Ohio school boards and others across the county have shown their intentions to keep information from parents regarding decisions with life altering consequences that youth should not be making absent from parental consent. Some boards are allowing sexually explicit material into classrooms and libraries without their own scrutiny and against discerning parental requests for elimination. Further, there are decisions parents are constitutionally allowed to make on behalf of their children and what makes up their school day.

It has come to my attention that language in SB293 will include language that 'shall' require public schools in Ohio to cooperate with Release Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) programs should they be initiated by the local community. This is language I fully support and would like to see Ohio adopt. Release time programs can be very healthy for a student and accomplished without disruption to critical classroom learning time. Decades of research indicate that religious instruction positively affects student behavior, academic performance, and mental health. Many programs that do exist around the country are during recess, lunch or otherwise optional class periods in the day. This opportunity for Release Time opportunities to exist in cooperation with Ohio Schools and School Board members should be codified with a yes vote on SB293.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for Senate Bill 293.

Sincerely,

Julie Bowers