

November 18, 2024

By email attachment to:

The Honorable Andrew O. Brenner, Chair, Senate Education Committee,
Brenner@OhioSenate.gov

The Honorable Michele Reynolds, Primary Bill Sponsor, Reynolds@ohiosenate.gov

Copied by email attachment to:

The Honorable Hearcel F. Craig, craig@ohiosenate.gov

The Honorable Dontavius L. Jarrells, Rep1@ohiohouse.gov

Re: Senate Bill 293

Dear Senators Brenner and Reynolds,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 293, the Senate's Bill that would require all Ohio School Boards to adopt a policy mandating Release Time for Religious Instruction (RTRI). I write in my individual capacity and from my perspective as the President of the Bexley City School District Board of Education. I have had an over 30-year career as an attorney and serve as the Bexley City School Board of Education's legislative liaison.

I oppose Senate Bill 293 for reasons that have been succinctly articulated by leaders in Education in Ohio and by numerous school boards and individual, including school board members: Senate Bill 293 and the companion House Bill 445 violate the Ohio governing principle of local control of public schools; they support RTRI programing that has been seen to lead to bullying and isolation of students; they hurt our students and teachers by limiting and disrupting instructional time; and they introduce legal and accountability questions for the public. Maintaining the current law protects local control and student instruction by allowing locally elected school board members to gauge the impact of religious release programs on student learning and levels of community support and to make decisions that will best reflect the desires and interests of the school community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,

/s/ Victoria E. Powers