

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Karley Porter. I am a citizen in Licking County, OH and a mother who cares about the health of our state's children and of the public school system. I am strongly opposed to SB 293 and its House counterpart HB 445.

The public school curriculum, including art, physical education, library, music, and global language, or "specials" has been constructed in the best interests of young, developing brains. By no means are they fluff classes merely meant to fill time in a school day. Music supports mathematical (not to mention spiritual) thinking, art supports creative thinking and critical skills, as well as motor skills and decision making, physical education supports sportsmanship, healthy bodies and minds, and teamwork, language arts support cognitive development, and library is core to student learning and motivating students to read and navigate knowledge, sources, and information. There is a reason most of our nation's top STEM schools like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Georgia Tech, and Cal Tech prioritize their music programs and all other buildings or departments that our elementary schools would deem "specials." The skills gained in specials are imperative to children developing neural pathways. I've listed just a few of the reasons for our specials, but this is by far not an extensive list of ways they support our children.

Having grown up in a parochial school, I fully understand the benefits children can learn from spiritual teachings. Please remember there is a reason that even Christian schools also include specials, because they are paramount for young brains. Taking children out of school to receive their spiritual lessons alienates them, robs them of critical learning that will serve them throughout their lives, and can be disruptive to their and others' school days. Why can they not either attend private school or receive these lessons during before or after school programs, or on the weekends?

I ask you to vote NO on this bill. It does not serve in the best interests of our children.

Sincerely,
Karley Porter