

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Laura Bolte. I am proud of my Ohio public school education, and I am strongly opposed to SB 293 and its House counterpart HB 445.

Thinking back to my time in school, I've been imagining how the proposed measure would have affected my education. My elementary, middle, and high schools all had packed days. I never once had a study hall, nor do I remember any sort of "free period" outside of lunch or recess that wasn't some sort of directed instruction. The only exception to this would have been when I was a high school Senior, taking advantage of the dual-enrollment program and pursuing further academic opportunities at Ohio State. Making room for a "free" period in my school's schedules to permit students to leave school for religious instruction would have taken time away from my education. The foundational education that gave me the opportunity to enroll in AP and college classes in high school. The foundational education that gave me the opportunity to be accepted into the college of my dreams. The foundational education that gave me a rich understanding of the world around me, through language, math, the arts, science, and vocational exploration.

Taking time out of the school day, by shortening class periods to add another, or removing courses to make room for a "free period" could have had the potential to be detrimental to my education. It could have robbed me of the opportunity to participate in classes such as band, AP Art History, or extended foreign language instruction. It could have robbed me of the opportunity to get my college math credits out of the way before I graduated. Over the years, I participated in a host of after-school activities, including classes at the neighborhood recreation center, sports, and private music lessons. These were after-school and weekend activities because they were not directly part of my academic instruction. They were in addition to. Religious instruction is no different.

I ask the Senate Education Committee to consider my testimony and vote NO on SB 293. Requiring school districts to permit release time during the school day for non-academic, religious instruction has serious potential to harm their academic success beyond the K-12 institutions, especially students who already have busy academic school days.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration.

Laura Bolte, Fort Hayes Arts and Academic High School, Columbus Public Schools, Class of 2006