

November 17, 2024

Dear Chair (Senator) Brenner,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 293.  
My name is Ronda Anderson and I live in Franklin County.

I want to respectfully urge you to take action to continue moving the bill through the legislative process.

Many parents who want their children to participate in religious instruction during the school day have had to deal with unnecessary roadblocks due to the wording “may” in the current RTRI wording. Senate Bill 293 addresses this issue by amending ORC 3313.6022. By changing the word from “may” to “shall” would require all school districts to adopt a policy for release time religious instruction,.

This would **give parents**, not school board members, the ultimate choice to decide if their children can participate. There are several school districts within the greater Central Ohio area (Gahanna, Westerville, Johnstown-Monroe) that have removed the RTRI policy. This has totally taken away parents right to choose what they feel is best for their child(ren). It has been school board members who are making the decision, not the parents.

In the case with Westerville City Schools, the board made the decision, in September 2024, to remove the RTRI policy that totally denied the parental rights of over 300 families, who had chosen to have their children involved in Lifewise Academy for two years.

Parents should have authority to decide if religious education is part of their child’s schooling, particularly if they are not able to afford private religious schools, homeschooling options, or after school programs. SB 293 makes religious education available to all students, including those in public schools, without adding anything additional to the the school or taxpayer.

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

Respectfully,  
Ronda Anderson