

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 Lindsay Patton and I am from Franklin County. The legislation at hand concerns one word change, but its implications are much greater. It places the responsibility of the content of their children's learning on the parents. My oldest child will be starting preschool next fall and the choice of her education is a great one. Who is teaching, where she is learning, and what she is learning are all questions we have asked ourselves when considering where our daughter should go to school. Her future life choices, career, and the shaping of who she is will be impacted by whom and where she is educated. We, however, are a fortunate family to have such a choice. Many families do not have the choice between homeschooling, private schooling, or public schooling. Hence the terrific opportunity for released time education.

Released time religious education is available to any religion who desires to seize the opportunity. The current wording of the legislation allows schools to remove the choice from the parents. This does not align with the great freedoms we have in our country. By rewording the law for released time education from "may" to "shall," parents will regain the freedom to choose the education they desire for the children. Research has shown that released time religious education leads to improved mental health, behavior, and academic performance. In our current state, the children would only benefit from this type of education. Raising children takes a village, which includes those who are providing education. Morally strong children will be leading our country in a matter of years. It is the decisions we make today that will impact the world we live in down the road.

With many parents not having much choice in their child's education due to lack of resources and time, allowing them to choose released time religious education is one way to place the privilege and responsibility back into the parent's hands. We should not boast in allowing schools to remove the privilege of choice in their child's education. Passing House Bill 445 to amend the wording of Ohio law is the wise and responsible choice. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for Senate Bill 293.

Sincerely, Lindsay Patton