

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 Daniel Carey and I live in Franklin County.

I am a Vietnam Era Veteran and grandfather to a 3rd grader. I have taught children's Sunday School most of my adult life and I presently am President of my church's Sunday School. Finally, I profess Jesus Christ as my savior.

Last Spring of this year I was introduced to LifeWise Academy because they wanted to use my church, in Sunbury as a host church this Fall. I attended their annual meeting in Westerville, and went to a parent orientation meeting for parents who are interested in LifeWise for their children or who have already signed their children into the program. I also observed two different Westerville school pick-ups and trips to host churches. I noticed children having fun in a safe and caring environment, not to mention professional presentations of Biblical classes taught by loving and caring teachers. Therefore, I ask my daughter to enlist my grandson and further I decided to volunteer.

Unfortunately, the Westerville School Board decided after four school board meetings to rescind their RTRI policy. This decision by the Westerville School Board was made after several of their concerns that they said did not meet their RTRI policy and although LifeWise agreed to make all the necessary corrections, the school board rescinded the RTRI policy because release time for religious instruction was disruptive to teachers, staff and students. I find this rational questionable since LifeWise has operated in Westerville for the last two years providing religious instruction to about 300 students.

I understand that 75% of Ohio school districts permit RTRI, and with the Westerville School Board's action, they undermine parent's rights to choose religious instruction during the school day. I believe that the LifeWise program is important and needed for our young people for the following reasons;

- Parents may not be able to finance admission to a private religious school.
- Children's sport programs often either have practice on Sunday or Sunday tournaments, so it is not always possible for children to attend Sunday School.
- An independent study by Thomas P. Miller and Associates found that children who attend RTRI programs have better school attendance and behave better in school.

Therefore, I respectfully request that this committee supports Senate Bill 293 so my 8yr. old grandson and other Ohio parents can freely choose to enroll their children in a RTRI program at their school. And thereby these young folks will receive the lifelong benefits of a program like LifeWise Academy.

Thank you