

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for reading my testimony. My name is Katie Hatcher, and I live with my family, including two kids enrolled in public school, in Perrysburg, Ohio.

I am strongly opposed to SB 34.

Displaying the Ten Commandments (or any reference to “God”) in a public school classroom violates the constitutional principle of separation between church and state. Public schools are government institutions, and the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment prohibits the government from endorsing or promoting a specific religion. The Ten Commandments are explicitly religious texts rooted in Judeo-Christian beliefs, and posting them in classrooms can make students who do not share those beliefs feel excluded or pressured to conform. Protecting religious neutrality ensures that families, not the government, guide a child’s spiritual development, and it preserves the rights of students of all faiths and of none.

Beyond the constitutional concerns, displaying religious doctrine in classrooms undermines the inclusive environment schools strive to create. Public schools serve diverse communities that include students from many religious traditions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and students who are agnostic or atheist. Introducing religious symbols or scriptures in that setting can create division, foster misunderstanding, and distract from the school’s core mission: providing an equitable, academically focused learning experience for all. Keeping classrooms secular does not diminish anyone’s personal religious freedom. Rather, it ensures that every student is welcomed, respected and able to learn without religious influence or coercion.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this unconstitutional bill. Thank you again for reviewing my testimony.

Katie Hatcher
Perrysburg