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Proponent Testimony: HB 353 – Testing Your Faith Act  
Ohio House of Representatives Committee on Higher Education & Career Readiness  
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Chairwoman Lanese, Vice Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I want to tell you why this bill is so important to me and others across Ohio. As a junior at Ohio University, I have had my fair share of issues with professors and instructors not excusing my absences during holidays or not allowing my work to be turned in late because of my observance.

One example of this is from my first year at Ohio University. I had a professor who threatened to drop my grade by a whole letter because I informed her I was missing class for Passover. I was able to invoke the school's policy on religious accommodations and save my grade, but I would not have been able to do this if the university did not already have an accommodation in place. Had I been at another school without this rule, my academic success would have suffered greatly.

Every year it seems that there is a friend who comes to me, very upset because they feel that they cannot miss class during the high holy days because they fear it will adversely affect their grades. Students should not have to choose between their religious observance and their academic success. Religious observance is something that is deeply personal and important to many students, and no student should have to give that up.

I hope that my words have inspired you to allow this bill to pass, and I would also like to make a suggestion. One facet of the "Test Your Faith Act" is that it covers up to three days of excused absences for religious reasons per school year. I know that most school years, especially with all of the holidays in the fall, there are several holidays that are very important. I would ask that the bill should be amended to cover three days a semester of excused absences, in order to better accommodate students. Thank you for your time. I am happy to take any questions.