

Chairwoman Lanese, Vice Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Committee, I am here today because my religious freedom is very important to me. I am a Jewish student at Ohio University and I have faced discrimination while trying to practice my religion. Earlier this year, my first semester at OU, I participated in Yom Kippur, the holiest high holiday in Judaism. For those of you who don't know, Yom Kippur comes with many restrictions such as not participating in work and school, it is the ultimate day of rest. It also requires a 25 hour fast which for those who don't normally participate, can be very difficult. Under these conditions, and practicing the other traditions of Yom Kippur, I was surely unable to attend class. HB 353 proposes that students inform their professors in the first 14 days of the start of the semester about their upcoming religious absences. Before knowing about this HB and the sections that came before, I still informed my TA within these parameters. I was given the response of, "This is not an adequate excuse to miss class". HB 353 also states that, "The policy shall require that students be provided with alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements missed..." In my case, I was not offered this and instead when I asked for an accommodation I was denied. I believe that the passing of this bill is crucial to my education and religious freedom as well as the generations that follow me. I also believe I was denied accommodations on a simple line of ignorance. If HB 353 is passed and Ohio University had this policy posted for students and faculty to see, such as proposed in the bill, then my situation could have possibly been avoided. My religion is of high value to me, and so is my education. I fully believe in the pursuit of religious freedom which is why I have come before you today. Thank you for your time, I am happy to take any questions.