

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 445. My name is Beth Falkenberg and I am from Medina County.

I am a retired teacher for the Wadsworth City Schools and over the years have seen a decline in the family unit as well as moral character in our students. My school system tries to include some time in their weekly lessons teaching a program called Character Strong. Unfortunately, this is left up to the already overwhelmed classroom teachers to fit it in when they can. We need more than just fitting character education for our students.

Decades of research have shown the positive impact of released time religious instruction on student's behavior, mental health and overall sense of well being. Most parents want their children to be moral beings with good character and they should get to decide whether to include religious education in their student's school day. Released time religious instruction allows this for families that are not able to attend private Christian schools or homeschool their children.

Unfortunately, many schools in Ohio are only allowing the RTRI to occur during lunch/recess which limits the program and takes away the quality it offers students because of the shorter time allowed for instruction. I would like to see these programs at their best for our children. One hour each week would allow for a wonderful, rich, engaging program to occur in our Ohio schools. Don't let the school superintendents and BOE push this RTRI time to only lunch/recess.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to advocate for House Bill 445.

Sincerely,

Beth Falkenberg