

May 29, 2024

Chair Gayle Manning, Vice Chair Sarah Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Phillip 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 Bob Reynolds and I live in Fairfield County. My experience with the Released Time for Religious Instruction program has been as head of Safety for the LifeWise program held at Grace Lutheran Church in Thornville, and with about 145 children from Thornville Elementary School who participated in this program during the 2023 – 2024 school year. I am nearly 81 years old, and am the great grandfather of 9 great grandkids of my own, some of whom are the same age as the children who participated in the Thornville program. Unfortunately, none of my great grandkids live in Perry County, so none have had the opportunity to participate in this program.

However, during this school year, I have had the opportunity to interact multiple times with many of the Thornville children as my safety team oversaw walking them from and back to their school, as well as making sure the entire church building was safe and secure for the children and the adult volunteers.

I can honestly say that I saw only enthusiasm and excitement from the children, from the time they exited the school doors until the time they returned. They embraced this opportunity in an extremely positive manner. I was impressed with how well they listened to the Bible stories being told and shown in the videos. They obviously were interested in what was being presented.

When this program was proposed to be held at Grace Lutheran, my interest was mainly ensuring the safety of the children, but as the year progressed, I became very supportive of the entire program. Their participation has had a very positive influence on their lives and their behavior. They are better children for having participated!

My wife and I now fully support the Released Time for Religious Instruction program state-wide, both with our participation and with our financial resources. I encourage the entire legislature of the State of Ohio to do so as well. The end result will be better citizens of both Ohio and the United States, wherever they end up living as adults.

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

Sincerely,

Bob Reynolds, PhD (retired)