

May 28, 2024

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 Kelli Bitner, I am from Miami County and I have had the privilege of teaching in a released time religious instruction program for the past two school years.

Society charges parents with the most important responsibility to raise healthy, caring children into productive and kind adults. Released Time Religious Instruction is a tool that comes alongside those parents to instill the values that are proven to bring about the desired results. HB 445 will ensure that parents have the opportunity to choose this invaluable tool.

As I understand, the US Supreme Court has ruled that Released Time Religious Instruction is a constitutional right. It is unfortunate that a bill must be passed to make sure that the rulings of our highest court are honored, but it seems that is the case. School boards, local leaders and, in very small communities, simple pressure from the loudest voices are making it more difficult for parents to raise their children as they see best. My son and daughter-in-law are already discussing the ways they see public institutions restricting parents rights. They have even discussed home-schooling and private schools to avoid the battle and my grandchildren are only 2, 3 and 5 years old.

I appreciate the public school system and see Released Time Religious Instruction as a partner to instill moral values alongside the schools efforts to teach academic skills necessary to succeed; it is because of these reasons, I put my support behind House Bill 445.

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

Sincerely,

Kelli Bitner
7535 N. Rangeline Road
Covington Ohio, 45318
Miami County