

## Written Testimony for HB 445

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 Nathan L. Pohlman and I am from Allen County.

I want to make clear the importance of allowing all parents to have the opportunity to choose released time religious instruction. Ohio needs HB 445 as not all school boards are voting in policy to allow this opportunity in their schools. Public school parents deserve to have the option for their children to take advantage of potential programs. A 2024 national poll by RMG Research found that 76% of voters favor teaching public school students moral and character education. In the last several years, parents have led movements in hundreds of school districts across the state to establish released time programs. I have seen this happen in my school district as well. However, some school districts in Ohio have been denying parents access to released time programs.

I would also like to highlight the measurable impact on students and public schools. Decades of research have shown the positive impact of religious instruction on student behavior, academics, and mental health. A recent independent study of public schools served by LifeWise Academy conducted by Thomas P. Miller & Associates found several measurable impacts, including improved attendance and behavior. Teachers and administrators in my school district have raved about similar measurable impacts.

I also believe giving public school parents the ultimate choice is the right thing to do. Parents know what is best for their children. They should get to decide whether to include religious education in their student's schedule. Many parents are not in a position to utilize religious private school or homeschool options. Released time makes religious education available to those who don't have access.

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

Sincerely,  
Nathan L. Pohlman