



**Senators Terhar and Thomas
SB 241 Sponsor Testimony
Senate Education Committee**

Chairman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing us to testify today on Senate Bill 241, which will give statutory recognition to the accreditation standards of the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS).

These standards have already been accepted by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and his/her Advisory Committee on Chartered Nonpublic Schools. This recognition would create a separate division within nonpublic schools that would no longer require Accredited Nonpublic Schools to be directly chartered by the State Board of Education. It would instead require schools to follow the ISACS accrediting standards, as well as the minimum standards required of all nonpublic schools, including non-chartered, non-tax schools (08 Schools), and would make optional some instruction/curriculum-based statutory requirements of chartered nonpublic schools.

The bill keeps the current structure of requiring all schools to at least initially have a charter and be required to follow the Operating Standards. Once a school achieves full ISACS accreditation, the school would have the option of receiving Accredited Nonpublic status for its school. This status means that a school is not chartered, but accredited, and therefore receives different statutory and administrative treatment with regard to

requirements it must follow. Accredited Nonpublic schools would still have some minimum academic and professional requirements to which they must adhere, such as mandated instruction subjects and teacher qualifications. The schools would also still be required to comply with the health and safety mandates that are now applicable to chartered nonpublic schools.

Other than these areas, the schools would largely be bound to fulfill the ISACS accreditation standards and maintain accredited status in order to remain as an Accredited Nonpublic school. Should a school lose its accreditation, its status would revert back to Chartered Nonpublic and would be responsible for complying with all statutes and rules required of Chartered Nonpublic schools.

The Department of Education (ODE) would still maintain some oversight of Accredited Nonpublic schools. For example, ODE would have the right to assign a representative to the ISACS visiting accreditation team to monitor the accrediting process for each Accredited Nonpublic School. ODE would also have the right to request a copy of a school's Self-Study Report from the school to determine the level of self-monitoring performed by the school. ODE would also continue to process background checks conducted on each Accredited Nonpublic School employee.

In summary, the significant changes proposed by the bill are as follows:

- Creates the Accredited Nonpublic School classification, requires schools to receive and maintain ISACS accreditation in order to remain classified as Accredited, provides ODE methods of assuring quality and generally exempts Accredited

Nonpublic Schools from requirements of chartered nonpublic schools under Title XXIII of the Revised Code unless specified otherwise

- Accredited Nonpublic Schools will have the same minimum requirements as Nonchartered, non-tax schools in the following areas: Length of school year, pupil attendance, courses of study, pupil promotion, pupil health and safety
- For purposes of state scholarship programs, Accredited Nonpublic Schools will have to follow same statutory mandates as chartered nonpublic schools.
- Teacher and administrator qualifications to teach at an Accredited Nonpublic School would be governed by ISACS accrediting standards (Those standards also require a bachelor's degree). The mandatory requirement that all schools (other than 08 schools) receive and maintain a charter would no longer be applicable to Accredited Nonpublic Schools.
- Removes statutory requirement for a local professional development committee (A requirement for a Teacher Services Committee exists in ISACS accreditation standards).

This legislation also creates a joint legislative committee to study the effectiveness of this new statutory division of schools. The committee will compare aggregate data of metrics such as remediation rates, SAT and ACT scores, and college acceptance rates from before and after this new division is created. The study committee is to submit a report to the General Assembly no later than two years after the effective date of the bill.

Madame Chairman, thank you again for allowing us to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 242, and we would be happy to take any questions at this time.