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Opponent/SB 241

Introduction – Good afternoon Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, ranking member Sykes and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Dan Meixner and I serve as the president of Chaminade Julianne Catholic High School in Dayton.

I am here in opposition of SB 241.

Chaminade Julianne, founded in 1850, serves nearly 700 students in grades 9-12. Our students come from 75 different elementary schools and 52 zip codes in the greater Dayton region. We serve the sons and daughters of wealthy families, for whom tuition does not represent a financial sacrifice, and the children of families in poverty, whose education at CJ is only possible because of our tuition assistance program and state scholarship programs - and everywhere in between. Because we believe that an excellent education demands diversity, we also serve students with varying academic needs - students who take every advanced placement course we can offer, students who maximize their opportunities under the College Credit Plus program, and students with special needs. 25% of our students are African American or biracial; 15% of our students are Latino; and 30% of our students come from families whose religious practices are other than Catholic. Nearly every graduate, regardless of economic condition of their family or their own academic ability, attends college in Ohio and throughout the country. More importantly, our alumni earn their college degrees or post-secondary credentials at rates that match or exceed the most affluent public schools in our area.

Our success indicates that students, regardless of their families affluence or their own academic preparation, learn best — and are best prepared for success in college and life — when they learn with students whose gifts and talents are different; whose backgrounds are different; whose views of the world have been shaped by different experiences.

We are concerned that SB 241 creates a perception that certain schools, those accredited by the Independent Schools Association of Central States, are of higher quality than schools accredited by some other ODE approved accrediting association. Although there are several hundred scholarship students enrolled in schools accredited by ISACS, they account for less than two (2) percent of the total number of students receiving state-sponsored scholarships. Thus, the bill creates a Division of Accredited Schools that identifies and exempts schools that primarily serve affluent families and students. Those schools like Chaminade Julianne committed to serving all students, including those taking advantage of state scholarships, will be excluded from the Division of Accredited Schools, giving rise to misconceptions that parents of students receiving state scholarships, are forced to settle for schools that are not of high enough quality to be in the same division as schools accredited by ISACS.

These misconceptions would do an injustice for Chaminade Julianne and other religious schools not accredited by ISACS, despite the fact that our accreditation process is as rigorous and comprehensive as that of ISACS.

To combat this misconception, schools like Chaminade Julianne would be forced to seek accreditation through (and pay dues to) ISACS in order to effectively compete for students, be deregulated, and take advantage of other benefits within the Division of Accredited Schools. Going through that accreditation process would not change the school, improve its service to students, or better prepare students to continue their education after high school. Without proceeding on this additional and unnecessary accreditation process, schools would be disenfranchised – not for lack of quality, but because of the religious dimension of their chosen accreditation process. This, on its face, is discriminatory.

In the interest of time, I will allow others to outline additional concerns we share about this bill.

For the record, I am in agreement with the concerns raised by Larry Keough of the Catholic Conference.

I ask each of you to refrain from supporting this bill, or ask that a series of interested party meetings are held to thoroughly vet this issue and render decisions that are fair and just for all.

At this time, I would be pleased to answer any questions