



# Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School

*Faith. Family. Future.*

Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Cleveland in opposition to SB241. My name is Richard Osborne. I am currently working in a consulting capacity for the diocesan Office of Catechetical Formation and Education, and I am the president emeritus of Cleveland's Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School. I served as chairman of the school's Board of Advisors from 2009-2011 and school president from 2011-2016. I was the interim president of Lake Catholic High School in Mentor, Ohio, for six months last year.

I believe the proposed legislation is unfair to our schools and others like ours across the state. Enactment would have a negative impact on our schools by creating a false impression of our relative merit, and it would penalize us for having a faith-based mission focused on serving the public good.

If exclusivity is the yardstick for measuring merit, as this bill seems to have as its premise, I would suggest that Ohio Catholic School Accrediting Association (OCSAA) schools are exclusive by the measure most relevant to this discussion. OCSAA is an *exclusively Ohio* organization. As such, OCSAA schools know our state, we know our local needs, and we understand Ohio-specific educational concerns.

Among those concerns is our responsibility to serve the communities in which we live — and, by extension, all the people of the State of Ohio. I note that by the most recent numbers I could find, only 6.5% of students enrolled in Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) schools are African-American. African-American enrollment is the *predominant* population in many of our schools. Twenty-two of our schools have a majority population of minority students. Overall, more than 27 percent of the enrollment in our schools is made up of minorities.

A University of Pennsylvania study of the success of African-American students in independent schools found that three-quarters of the students surveyed said they had to make special efforts to fit into their school communities; 82 percent reported that they had negative experiences at their schools; and 40 percent did not believe that the school treated all students the same. Clearly, the sort of "exclusivity" engendered in these schools is not to be desired.

Moreover, to suggest that the highly restrictive population of ISACS schools somehow marks the quality of education they provide as inherently superior is, at the very least, misleading and dismissive of the values inherent in the mission of our schools.

*Catholic education in the Ursuline and Marianist traditions*

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While serving a vast socioeconomic cross-section of families, our schools achieve these impressive results:

- National test scores, high school graduation rates, college entrance and a host of other data show that Catholic schools routinely outperform schools in both the public and private sectors.
- The Catholic Church serves the nation with more than 6,500 elementary and secondary schools. Catholic schools provide the country with some \$24 billion in savings every year.
- Ohio, by the way, should be rightfully proud that it is one of the Top 10 states in the nation where Catholic schools serve the *most* students.
- Our high school graduation rates dwarf those of other schools with 99 percent of Catholic school students receiving their high school diplomas.
- In the Diocese of Cleveland, 97 percent of our graduates regularly go on to higher education.

This remarkable performance is achieved despite these daunting local challenges:

- 54 percent of the children in the City of Cleveland live in poverty.
- 36 percent will not graduate from high school.
- 89 percent won't graduate from college.

These are the people our Catholic schools serve. Our students go on to become our local mayors, business owners, corporate executives, government leaders, journalists, attorneys, social workers and teachers — not to mention a host of other professional roles — each of them educated to fulfill their callings with a commitment to improve the society in which they dwell.

That is how we define success and, while we don't seek special status for pursuing our mission, we strenuously object to any effort designed to relegate us to a lower plane.

There is NO evidence that our schools are somehow inferior simply because our faith calls us to serve *all* God's people. And the last thing Ohio needs in these divisive times is the institutionalizing of a clearly false and elitist concept that suggests otherwise, and is therefore counterproductive to the public good.

Sincerely,



Richard Osborne  
President Emeritus