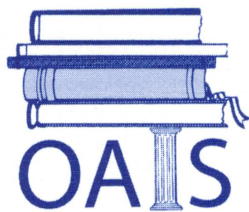


- Agnon School
- Andrews Osborne Academy
- Birchwood School
- Canton Country Day
- Cincinnati Country Day
- Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy
- Columbus Academy
- Columbus Jewish Day School
- Columbus School for Girls
- Columbus Torah Academy
- Gilmour Academy
- Grand River Academy
- Hathaway Brown School
- Hawken School
- Hershey Montessori School
- Hudson Montessori School
- Lake Ridge Academy
- Laurel School
- Lawrence School
- Linden Grove School
- Lippman Day School
- Mansion Day School
- Marburn Academy
- Maumee Valley Country Day
- McGuffey Foundation School
- Miami Valley School
- The New School
- Old Trail School
- Olney Friends School
- Ratner School
- Ridgewood School
- Ruffing Montessori School - Cleveland Heights
- Ruffing Montessori School - Rocky River
- Schilling School for Gifted Children
- Seven Hills School
- Spring Garden Waldorf School
- Springer School and Center
- Summit Country Day
- University School
- Village Academy Schools
- Wellington School
- Welsh Hills School
- Western Reserve Academy



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May 17, 2017

Ohio Senate Finance Committee **Primary & Secondary Education Subcommittee**

Testimony - Ohio Association of Independent Schools **Dan Dodd, Executive Director**

Chairman Hite, Vice Chair Sykes and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Ohio Association of Independent Schools regarding House Bill 49.

There is a quote from Rear Admiral Grace Hopper that states, "The most damaging phrase in the language is, 'We've always done it this way.'" In our search for innovation and efficiency, the private school mandates in the Ohio Revised Code are a reflection of the "we've always done it this way" attitude. OAIS member schools compete with quality, free public school options and lower-priced private school alternatives. Our schools continue to graduate high-achieving students because of the emphasis we place on innovation and implementing new ways to educate. OAIS schools constantly look for ways to stretch the funds they receive and utilize them in an efficient manner. We need the General Assembly to remove statutory obstacles to innovation, efficiency and achievement so our schools can enjoy the same freedom of independent schools in other states; a freedom required for our continued success.

ISACS-Accredited School Pilot Project

As the committee members may know, OAIS often opposes any new mandates for nonpublic schools that are not related to the health and safety of our communities. Our schools have a long and distinguished history of success and I feel secure in saying that such achievement is not because of the intervention of Ohio's General Assembly. OAIS member schools attract school leaders from around the nation, and without exception, those I talk to upon their arrival are struck by the level of regulation in Ohio from state government. One change that I have noticed in my six years at OAIS is that now incoming heads from other states are already aware of the reputation of Ohio as the most regulated state for independent schools in the nation.

It is time for Ohio to shed its image as an overly restrictive state for independent schools. This is why OAIS is asking legislators to approve a two-year pilot project for ISACS-accredited schools to demonstrate that they are more than capable of fulfilling their missions with greater regulatory freedom. The pilot project would create a division of Accredited Nonpublic Schools that will allow ISACS-accredited schools to adhere to their accrediting association standards rather than the Ohio Operating Standards. Functioning as a separate division would provide greater flexibility in curriculum requirements, hiring decisions and professional development, among other things.

After two years, the General Assembly would be able to review the results and determine if schools accredited by other nonpublic accrediting associations could also qualify for the designation. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) would retain some oversight, as representatives from ODE would have the right to accompany the visiting accrediting teams on visits to schools, and ODE would also receive a copy of the visiting team's report and the school's self-study report.

What OAIS is proposing is not earth shattering and will not disadvantage other private schools. We simply believe that our state needs to loosen the reins that are currently on independent schools and allow our schools to have the freedom that independent schools enjoy in other states.

Auxiliary Services Funding Reform for Non-Religious Private Schools

OAIS schools recognize that we are fortunate to receive support from the state in the form of auxiliary services funding and administrative cost reimbursement. Auxiliary services funding is approved for the purchase of specific types of materials and services that are allowed by statute. Administrative cost reimbursement is provided to schools when the schools implement and fulfill certain mandates placed upon schools or students that are required under state law. It is incumbent upon our schools to utilize those resources in the most efficient manner possible.

One priority for OAIS in this legislative session is a slight alteration to the current law regarding state funding for auxiliary services. OAIS believes the current law should be adjusted to allow non-religious private schools to receive auxiliary services funding directly from the state, rather than using a school district as a go-between. A school district's involvement is required for religious schools, which are forbidden by the Ohio Constitution from receiving school funds directly from the state, but such a prohibition is not necessary for schools that are not religious in nature. For over forty years, state law needlessly lumps in secular private schools with religious schools for no compelling reason.

There are some clarifications about this proposed change that are important to note. First, it would not change the statutory purposes for which a nonpublic school can use auxiliary funds. Second, it would relieve school districts of the burden of processing the multitude of invoices submitted by schools. Third, by sending the money directly to the school, it reduces the likelihood that a school will have unused funds at the end of a biennium, which often happens now because school districts do not provide regular updates of the amount of money remaining and do not process invoices by the June 30th cutoff. Fourth, and perhaps most important, any money received directly by a secular private school would be subject to a regular audit by ODE.

The fundamental effect of this proposed change would mean more money spent directly in classrooms, fewer dollars spent on bureaucratic paperwork and the more effective use of tax dollars.

International Students / Athletics

The bylaws of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) specifically prohibit "non-resident" foreign or out-of-state students enrolled at a school in Ohio from participating in any OHSAA-sanctioned events or any club teams in sports sanctioned by the OHSAA. This prohibition is in place for all foreign-born students who are here legally but have not made a legal change of residence to Ohio and do not meet other strict guidelines put in place by OHSAA. The OHSAA bylaws, however, do allow an exception for exchange students. This means that students attending a private school since the 6th grade

may not play any sports in grades 9-12, yet a student who is here for one year may participate. The current bylaw is designed to discriminate against private schools, which often enroll foreign students for multiple years, as opposed to exchange students who may attend public schools for one year.

The prohibition on international students participating in athletics has a damaging effect on the OAIS schools with boarding or home-stay programs. When it comes to deciding where to send their children to school, international families usually have no natural allegiance to Ohio. The families, who are paying approximately \$50,000 a year in room and board, are looking for their children to have a truly American high school experience. Having the option to participate in athletics is a part of that experience, not to mention the leadership and other character traits that are developed as a result of participating in athletics.

To deny an entire segment of Ohio's high school population of this opportunity solely because of where they were born, despite their status of being here in Ohio legally, is unconscionable. OAIS encourages the General Assembly to adopt a statute allowing all students here legally to participate in athletics.

College Credit Plus (CCP) Opt-out for Private Schools

In 2015, OAIS sought to clarify the current CCP statute to specify that the option of private schools to participate in program that existed under the earlier PSEO program still exists. As of right now, the (erroneous) interpretation of the Department of Higher Education is that private schools do not have to participate in the program, but once a student chooses to participate, the student essentially forces the school into becoming a participating school. The language sought in 2015 by OAIS was eventually included in the budget but was vetoed by Governor Kasich.

OAIS continues to advocate for a private school opt-out to restore the autonomy that private schools had in previous years. Concerns raised by the Governor's office regarding an opt-out are valid ones, which is why OAIS recommends an amendment that requires a nonparticipating private school notify the parents at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment that the school does not participate in CCP. Additional concerns were raised about students who attend a private school with an EdChoice voucher because those students may have limited options for finding a private school to attend and may have significant financial obstacles to fully exercise a choice in private schools. OAIS supports language that would require students or schools participating in the EdChoice program to participate in CCP. If the members of the committee would like to further limit the number of schools that could opt out, we would suggest having the opt-out option extend only to schools accredited by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS).

House Addition to HB 49 – Mandated Postings by Private Schools

While the House did not include any of our recommendations in our version of House Bill 49, they did manage to impose more mandates and regulations on our schools. The House added ORC 3301.164, which would require private schools to post their total enrollment, policies on background checks, curricula and reading lists on a publicly accessible web site. This language is similar to Rep. Brinkman's House Bill 401 from last session.

I would note a few things about these provisions. First, a stakeholder meeting was convened last year to discuss HB 401 and it was pointed out at the time to Rep. Brinkman that the enrollment for

every chartered nonpublic school is available on the ODE website. At the time, ODE representatives were asked to look into making those numbers easier to find for the few parents who might be interested. Apparently, ODE failed to make any changes but private schools should not be saddled with another mandate because ODE did not respond in a satisfactory manner. It was pointed out at the same meeting that policies on background checks in place at private schools are dictated by Ohio Revised Code requirements. It is difficult to figure out what purpose it serves to force private entities to post the statutory requirements on a website. Finally, it was also pointed out to the Representative that ISACS accrediting guidelines would not permit a school to withhold information on the curriculum or reading list at a school. Our schools must follow these accrediting guidelines in order to maintain the statutory and regulatory exemptions provided to ISACS-accredited schools. There is no reason to tack on another statutory mandate to require this when our standards already do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.