Written testimony on Substitute House Bill 49

May 24, 2017

State Senator Cliff Hite, Chairman

State Senator Venon Skyes, Ranking Member and Vice Chair

Dear Senators,

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the undersigned. We wish to bring to your attention a provision in the House-passed budget that exempts state-sponsored scholarship students in schools accredited by the Independent Schools Association of Central States (ISACS) from taking assessments under the College & Work Ready Assessment System to meet one of the three pathways for high school graduation.

Our ask if for you to please amend the bill by **removing this language**. The following is rationale why the ISACS exemption is poor public policy and should be removed.

If there is consideration to exempt students on Jon Peterson or Autism scholarships, it should not be based on ISACS, which is used to preclude non-ISACS accredited schools from exemptions. Moreover, linking state-testing exemptions to accreditation is poor public policy. ISACS and other accrediting associations are intended to create a baseline of standardization, not student outcomes through testing. Moreover, by referencing ISACS in statue as a basis for the exemption, it creates a false dichotomy that ISACS is superior to other accrediting associations of chartered nonpublic schools. **It is not.**

Any discussion of an exemption should be based on a student-centered approach that is fair and just for all public and chartered nonpublic school students with a disability.

**Consequences** of an exemption for state-sponsored scholarship students in ISACS accredited schools: Let’s remember there are more than 250,000 K-12 students in Ohio with a documented disability. If the ISACS exemption were to become law, families of public school students and families of non-ISACS accredited chartered nonpublic schools would rightfully question rationale for state testing.

When a precedent has been set, it is natural for other stakeholders to question what is rightfully theirs under current regulations. This would increase the likelihood that the principles which guide the state requirements for publicly-funded students would be seriously compromised, thus jeopardizing the statue which exists to treat all similarly-abled students on a “level playing field”.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We will be prepared to fully answer your questions in the coming weeks as we provide in-person testimony before the full Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

**Travis Grulke Rick Bianco Lee C. Reno**

**Superintendent Superintendent of Schools Legislative Advocate**

**Lutheran Schools of Ohio Ohio Conference of Seventh-Day Association of Christian**

**Ohio District LCMS Adventists Schools of Ohio**

**Education Executive**