



OHIO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NETWORK

A project of Citizens for Community Values

November 17th, 2020

Dear Chairman Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and Members of the House Civil Justice Committee,

When a religious entity undertakes the creation of a nonpublic school they usually do because they want to offer children a benefit, an education that will enhance not only their worldly knowledge but also their moral compass. Schools enact their mission by hiring like-minded teachers and staff who can each contribute to the child's whole person. This mission cannot be taken lightly as outside pressure to succeed from paying parents, opponents of private schools, and state regulation is more intense for private schools than public schools. Likewise, in developing a curriculum that challenges the child, meets the standards of the parent, and conforms to state regulation, religious schools have many requirements on their plate.

The enactment of HB 369 would impede their mission in several ways. First, religious schools would be forced to hire teachers or staff with beliefs and lifestyles conflicting with religious school values. This would create a poor work and learning environment for everyone involved. Second, HB 369 could force religious schools to teach a *comprehensive education program*, controlling the curriculum that these schools have cultivated to meet their students' educational and spiritual needs. The vagueness of this education program requirement could in practice create tenets that contradict or harm the mission of the religious schools. Lastly, this legislation infringes on religious beliefs sincerely held by religious schools. Including beliefs for love of our neighbors, a piece of their mission that is more expansive than any anti-discrimination policy a state could enact.

When a parent chooses to send their child to a nonpublic school they usually do because they want their child's education to go beyond what a public school can offer. Whether that's more STEM, special needs, college prep, or religious values. It is the parent's right to make this decision, to control, their child's education. Parents chose a religious school because they agree with and trust the educators, who care for their children, to instill certain beliefs and help form their child in a holistic way.

HB 369 infringes on this parental right by removing the trust the parents have placed in the school to educate their children in line with a set of core beliefs. The education will not conform to what the parents expect and want for their children. Parents make a choice when they send their child to private religious school. State regulations undermine this choice by saying the state knows better than the parent what education to provide. HB 369 infringes on parents' rights to control their child's education, and their right to practice and educate their child in the ways of that religion.

When a child goes to a religious school they expect to learn, socialize, and pray. They do not expect to be assaulted in the bathroom, lose their spot on a sports team to a bigger, faster, biologically different opponent, or be told their mental health struggles could be alleviated with hormone therapy, as has happened at schools with ambiguous gender policies. Children attend religious schools to be formed in the ways of their family of faith, to discover, and to love their neighbor.

If a school is forced to hire teachers who disagree, to educate with a curriculum that oversteps, and to deny their religious beliefs, it is the child who loses. Proponents of sexual-orientation and gender-identity policies have said, "If any member of our community is vulnerable, then we are all vulnerable." (Keith Ari Benjamin, Director of Community Services for the City of South Euclid.) The vulnerable members in our community are the children. Let the schools in conjunction with the parents do what they set out to do: educate the whole child. Religious schools and the teachers in them know best how to teach the children to love their neighbor. Not only is HB 369 harmful to schools, it is unnecessary.

Respectfully,

Corrinne Vidales, J.D.
Assistant Director
Ohio Christian Education Network
Citizens for Community Values