

HB 339 Proponent Testimony

Peter Folger

2/13/24

Chair Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education committee, my name is Pete Folger, and I am writing to testify in support of House Bill 339 which intends to fund savings accounts for parents who have their children enrolled in non-chartered, non-public schools here in the state of Ohio.

This bill designed to help families who would like their children in these kinds of schools is deeply personal to me as my wife and I are both graduates of one of these schools. My wife legally immigrated here with her family when she was a young girl. Her parents enrolled her at Heritage Christian School and it was all they could do to keep her there. Had this option been available to them it would have made their financial lives much less stressful.

My children are also enrolled or have already graduated from one of these schools. While none of them are a finished product, they have all or will have all received a solid education and will arrive at college someday soon equal to or surpassing their peers. It is my honor to serve as the superintendent of one of these schools. I have observed first-hand the quality of education that NCNP schools deliver, despite the financial constraints placed upon them. Most of our teachers make a third or less of what other teachers in the state of Ohio make, and yet deliver an equal and, in some cases, superior product to other schools. It is not uncommon or unusual for a student to transfer to our school from an area public school, and find themselves in need of a significant amount of time to bring themselves up to the rigorous academic standards found in many NCNP schools. Many of our graduates have gone on to experience great success in various fields like business, medicine, politics, and education. I know some have expressed concern regarding accountability as it relates to these schools. Our record speaks for itself.

Parents who enroll their children in NCNP schools in the state of Ohio do so at their own financial liability. Already, through their tax dollars they are helping to fund their child's education in the local public school where they currently reside. In addition, they are responsible for tuitions and fees at the NCNP school of their choice. In reality, families who choose NCNP schools are paying double for their child's education. It is reasonable that the state provide some relief to these families who decide that a non-chartered, non-public school is in their child's best interest for education.

I am a firm believer in school choice. A parent living in the state of Ohio should not be compelled to send their child to only one school. Our state's lawmakers and educators should not fear school choice, but should embrace it, as competition makes everyone stronger. For fifty years Heritage Christian School in Brooklyn, Ohio has offered a great education at an affordable price. According to Cleveland.com it cost the state of Ohio \$13,805 to educate a public school student in 2020. We can assume that number has risen some in the past four years. Most NCNP schools are educating children for far less than that.

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If the state wants to receive the best return on their investment, they should embrace school choice. Organizations that face competition (including public schools), have shown dramatic improvement in their performance.

I am urging you to support HB 339. The passing of this bill would ensure all families have legitimate options when it comes to their child's education, while at the same time making every school in our entire state a better place to receive an education.

Thank you,

Peter Folger
Cleveland Baptist Church