

Testimony as Interested Party Am.Sub.HB96 (136th GA)

Chair Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair Louis Blessing, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, and other distinguished members of the Senate Education Committee, **thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Amended Substitute House Bill 96.**

My name is Keith Hamblen, I live in Lima, and serve as the Pastor of Calvary Bible Church and Superintendent of its school the Lima Christian Academy. I also serve as the Executive Director of the Buckeye Christian School Organization (BCSO), a group of sixteen nonchartered, nonpublic schools established in 1985. I have represented the nonchartered schools in Ohio on the Ohio Department of Education's Superintendent's Non-Public Superintendent's Advisory Council (NPA) since that council's inception under then State Superintendent Ted Sanders (1991-1995). On that council, I have spoken on behalf of all the nonchartered schools and not just the ones in our BCSO organization. The other members of the NPA are all chartered schools.

HB96 passed with a provision for establishing nonchartered education savings accounts (NESAs). The HB96 language calls for the posting of standardized test scores of participating nonchartered schools on the ODEW website and calls for the treasurer to turn over "any data" to the ODEW as they request (this "any data" is unspecified best I can tell). **These provisions were added** to the stand-alone SB68 (which also would create NESAs).

Those who educate for truly held religious beliefs believe that it is not appropriate to ask permission of (be licensed or chartered by) the state to educate their children. They are willing to notify the state but not to ask permission. The two nonnegotiables are teacher qualifications and curriculum (content, testing). It is for the church ("religious body") and parents to be determiners in these two areas.

THIS RELIGIOUS REASON IS THE ORIGINAL REASON FOR THE EXISTENCE (RAISON D'ETRE) OF THE NONCHARTERED POSITION

There is necessary "fiduciary responsibility," **but posting test scores on the ODEW's website does not meet that responsibility.** The fiduciary accountability measures are sufficient in SB68 (test scores being reported to the treasurer; the state being authorized to audit participating schools; the ability of the ODEW to remove suspect schools from their list; parents care about their kids).

The nonchartered position consistently has maintained that **academic content** (testing results) and **teacher qualifications** are the responsibility of parents and churches. Our people agreed to the additional reporting of test scores to the state treasurer in SB68 for those participating in NESAs—but when the House added ODEW posting and the "any data" provision, that goes too far. **What I am asking at this point is if you would be willing to "amend" HB96 to return the NESA section to the SB68 wording (this entails the removal of lines 48146-48167 in HB96).**

Thanks much,
Pastor Keith Hamblen
Lima Christian Academy

Buckeye Christian School Organization

(Have represented O8/nonchartereds before OBE/ODE for many years)