

1. Good afternoon, my name is Nick Kuechly. As a lifelong, third generation Buckeye, it is my distinct privilege to be here today. Thank you for this opportunity! I serve as the Chairman of the Board of Mars Hill Academy in Mason, Ohio, and I'm here to advocate for the incredible benefit of non-chartered, non-tax supported schools for the citizens *and* the state of Ohio.
2. As a society, why do we invest so much time and money into the education of our young people? The most direct answer is to equip our children to thrive, and to make valuable contributions to society. But how does this philosophical question pertain to the question before us today? As a society, a government, and parents, we should seek to provide the very best possible means to attain these broad ends within our available resources, while making that accessible to all.
3. If we walked the breakfast food aisle of a grocery store, we would find countless options for cereal alone. People desire, indeed need, a broad selection of cereal options to accommodate their many dietary desires and restrictions. The grocer would not offer them if people did not choose them. And if this is true for cereal, how much more so for choice in education? My great-nephew attends a school that specializes in students with ADHD. There are vocational schools, performing arts schools, IT schools, etc. We inherently accept this premise because we already support diverse kinds of schools.
4. Mars Hill and similar schools present a valuable additional educational choice, and one that should be ardently supported by society. Mars Hill is unique in many ways which are highly valued by our parent community, and which ultimately lead to the flourishing of our families, communities, and our state. Yet, one could argue that does not matter if we are not equipping our children to thrive and to make valuable contributions to society, or if we did so at a cost that was out of line with other cost metrics. We all care about performance and accountability – so let's get straight to the heart of the matter.
5. First off, Mars Hill is accredited by both the ACCS and the NCPS, and conforms to the rigorous accreditation requirements of both.
6. Second, The University of Notre Dame conducted an in depth research analysis of 23-44 year olds revealing that graduates from schools like Mars Hill rank statistically higher than *all other types of schools* in the following critical categories: well prepared for college, community involvement including giving of time to poor/elderly, allowing for religious diversity and discussion, and having an obligation to take action against injustice. Aren't these the kinds of graduates that we want?!
7. Third, our school specifically has accomplished something that no other school in America has done. All of you can be proud that an Ohio school, has been the number one school in the country on the CLT for five of the past six years. Any school that achieves those kinds of results ought to garner not just the attention, but the overwhelming support of its state. And yet, we are not a school for the gifted – rather we are a school for families who are serious about educating their children. This easily overlooked detail ought to gain even more support.
8. Fourth, our highly sought graduates have been accepted to 63 different colleges and universities including UC, UD, Purdue, military academies, University of Michigan and THE Ohio State University, with over half going into STEM fields.

9. Ultimately though, real accountability comes from the parents who sacrifice greatly to enroll their children each year in our school. If we do not perform, then we do not exist. And it is the parent who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that their child is properly educated.
10. Honorable members of this committee, by supporting this legislation, you will create additional opportunities where none exist today for children and parents across our state to receive the immeasurable benefits of a school like Mars Hill.
11. Thank you, again, for your time today.