

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 96.

My name is Laura Fryan, and I reside in Massillon, Ohio and I am the co-founder and president of the board for Canton Christian School in Canton, Ohio. I am advocating for the reinstatement of Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) and the \$1,500 tax credit for families of students attending non-chartered nonpublic schools, provisions that were recently removed from House Bill 96 and the state budget.

Canton Christian School just finished its inaugural year. We are located on the campus of Malone University in Canton, Ohio. A group of parents and teachers started this school last summer after we encountered serious administrative issues at the previous school that we attended and where our teachers taught. We follow all regulations and teach in accordance with Ohio state standards. Despite being non-chartered, our school operates in a professional manner and follows all requirements like having a fire and safety inspection each year, just like any other school. I feel as though there's a sentiment out there that non-chartered non-public schools are somehow inferior to a chartered school or public school, but that is absolutely false. And our families pay taxes to their local school district just like everyone else, but we cannot access EdChoice or any other government funds so our families would not even receive a small amount of financial relief at all by attending Canton Christian School if the provisions of House Bill 96 above are not reinstated.

### **Understanding Non-Chartered Nonpublic Schools**

Non-chartered nonpublic (NCNP) schools, such as Canton Christian School, operate based on sincerely held religious beliefs that preclude them from seeking state charters. Despite not being chartered, these schools are committed to providing quality education and are required to annually certify compliance with Ohio's Operating Standards for NCNP schools.

### **The Financial Burden on Families**

Families choosing NCNP schools often do so to align their children's education with their faith and values. However, these families face significant financial challenges:

- **Lack of Access to State Funds:** Unlike families whose children attend chartered nonpublic schools, NCNP school families are ineligible for state-funded scholarships like EdChoice, despite contributing to state taxes .
- **Dual Financial Responsibility:** These families effectively pay twice—once through taxes supporting public education and again through out-of-pocket tuition costs for their chosen NCNP schools.

## **The Importance of Educational Savings Accounts and Tax Credits**

The proposed ESAs and the \$1,500 tax credit are vital for alleviating the financial strain on NCNP school families:

- **Educational Savings Accounts:** ESAs would provide families with dedicated funds to cover educational expenses, offering flexibility and support tailored to their children's needs .
- **\$1,500 Tax Credit:** This tax credit would directly reduce the financial burden on families, making it more feasible for them to continue choosing educational paths aligned with their beliefs .

## **Equity and Educational Choice**

Reinstating these provisions promotes educational equity by:

- **Supporting Parental Choice:** Empowering parents to choose the best educational setting for their children without undue financial hardship.
- **Recognizing Diverse Educational Models:** Valuing the contributions of NCNP schools to Ohio's educational landscape and acknowledging the rights of families to select faith-based education.

## **Conclusion**

Canton Christian School urges the Ohio Senate to reconsider and reinstate the Educational Savings Accounts and the \$1,500 tax credit for NCNP school families. These measures are not merely financial tools; they are affirmations of Ohio's commitment to educational diversity, parental choice, and religious freedom.

Thank you for your attention and dedication to serving the educational needs of all Ohio families.

Respectfully,

Laura Fryan, Co-Founder and President of the Board, Canton Christian School