



**Lutheran  
Schools  
of Ohio**

**Ohio District - LCMS**  
Lutheran Schools of Ohio  
6451 Columbia Rd.  
Olmsted Falls, OH 444138

**Senate Finance Committee – Public Testimony  
June 1<sup>st</sup> / 2017**

Mr. Chairman, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, my name is Travis Grulke and I am the Superintendent of Lutheran Schools of Ohio. I appreciate the opportunity to offer this testimony on behalf of our schools and on behalf of the Ohio Conference of Seventh Day Adventists and the Association of Christian Schools International.

Our schools strongly urge you to remove a provision that currently exists in the House-passed budget bill that provides an exclusive exemption to state-sponsored scholarship students in schools accredited by the Independent Schools Association of Central States (ISACS) from taking assessments under the College & Work Ready Assessment System to meet one of the three pathways for high school graduation.

We respectfully, but emphatically ask you to support an amendment that will remove this language. The following is rationale why the ISACS exemption should be removed:

First, if there is consideration to exempt students on Jon Peterson or Autism scholarships, it **should not** be based on ISACS. Linking state-testing exemptions to accreditation is poor public policy. ISACS and other accrediting associations are intended to create a baseline of standardization, not student outcomes through testing. ISACS is one of five nonpublic schools accrediting bodies recognized by the Ohio Department of Education. If you read through the documents and criteria of the five accrediting associations, you will clearly see that there is **nothing** that sets ISACS apart from the others. By referencing ISACS in statute as a basis for the exemption, it creates a false dichotomy that ISACS is superior to other accrediting associations. **Simply put, it is not.**

Second, a testing exemption was given to ISACS schools two years ago. That exemption was wrong then; the House passed budget bill that seeks to exempt state-sponsored scholarship students in schools accredited by ISACS is wrong now. Our associations were at fault for not doing enough to share our opposition to that testing exemption two years ago, but we will not make that mistake twice. The head of OAIS shared the following in his communication with his schools after receiving the testing exemption, *“We couldn’t be more pleased that the State of Ohio has recognized ISACS-accredited schools, in statute, as being the best in the state and are treating them accordingly under state law.”* This nonsensical and arbitrary idea that being accredited by ISACS somehow makes you among the best schools in the state is at the heart of the whole issue and is a not something our state legislature should encourage or support.

With ISACS accredited schools already receiving exemption from testing for their students not on a state sponsored scholarship, the exemption in the House passed budget bill continues to establish ISACS as the arbitrary gatekeeper to which students should and should not be tested by the state. What is the next exemption they will seek?

We are not alone in our opposition to any exemptions for ISACS accredited schools. We join the Catholic Conference in calling for the removal of this random exemption in the House passed budget bill. Our three associations in combination with the Catholic Conference make up the vast majority of nonpublic schools in the state of Ohio. Well over 80% of nonpublic schools—the schools that educate a good number of your constituents, support the removal of this exemption from the bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and Rick, Lee and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have on this matter.

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**Lutheran Schools of Ohio**  
**Ohio District LCMS**

**Rick Bianco**  
**Superintendent of Schools**  
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