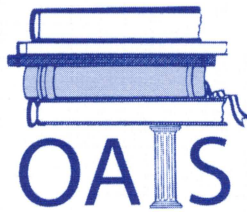


- Agnon School
- Andrews Osborne Academy
- Birchwood School
- Canton Country Day
- Cincinnati Country Day
- Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy
- Columbus Academy
- Columbus Jewish Day School
- Columbus School for Girls
- Columbus Torah Academy
- Gilmour Academy
- Grand River Academy
- Hathaway Brown School
- Hawken School
- Hershey Montessori School
- Hudson Montessori School
- Lake Ridge Academy
- Laurel School
- Lawrence School
- Linden Grove School
- Lippman Day School
- Mansion Day School
- Marburn Academy
- Maumee Valley Country Day
- McGuffey Foundation School
- Miami Valley School
- The New School
- Old Trail School
- Olney Friends School
- Ratner School
- Ridgewood School
- Ruffing Montessori School - Cleveland Heights
- Ruffing Montessori School - Rocky River
- Schilling School for Gifted Children
- Seven Hills School
- Spring Garden Waldorf School
- Springer School and Center
- Summit Country Day
- University School
- Village Academy Schools
- Wellington School
- Welsh Hills School
- Western Reserve Academy



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February 13, 2018

Ohio House Education Committee

Testimony – HB 442

Dan Dodd, Executive Director

Ohio Association of Independent Schools

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 442. My name is Dan Dodd and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Independent Schools, an association of 45 independent private schools, 38 of which are accredited by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS).

The vast majority of students on an F-1 visa are not permitted by the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) to participate in athletics. This is striking because, as you may recall from Representative Antani’s sponsor testimony on HB 442, OHSAA firmly believes in the benefits that athletic participation provides to high school students throughout Ohio. On its website, OHSAA asserts:

- “Participation in interscholastic athletic programs complements a student’s school experience and teaches lifelong lessons of hard work, teamwork and self-discipline.”
- “Interscholastic athletics programs exist to prepare students for the next level of life, not the next level of sports.”
- “Participation in interscholastic athletics programs can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and create memories that will last forever.”
- “All students, regardless of ethnicity, race or gender, should have an equal opportunity to participate in interscholastic athletic programs.”

Our members agree wholeheartedly with OHSAA on what athletic participation provides to students. We also agree that all students, regardless of ethnicity, should have an equal opportunity to participate in interscholastic athletic programs.

Unfortunately, the words on the OHSAA website do not match the organization's bylaws. OHSAA, dominated by public school members whose principals vote to approve bylaws in their official capacities as taxpayer-funded school employees, banned the vast majority of students with a certain kind of government-issued visa from participating in athletics and gaining all of the life experiences that come with athletic competition nearly twenty years ago. OHSAA, essentially functioning as a quasi-public organization, is discriminating against these students based on their national origin. Mind you, these students are not trying to obtain the right to vote or access to government benefits; they only want to play high school sports.

A survey of Midwestern and "Big 10" states indicates that Ohio is an outlier when it comes to banning F-1 visa students from participating unless they meet certain criteria that are inapplicable to most F-1 visa holders. Other than West Virginia, every other state surveyed in the region allows some athletic eligibility for F-1 visa students, while other states like Florida also provide eligibility.

Representatives from OHSAA hide behind a couple of excuses for its ban of these students. One claim is students from other countries are in danger of being "exploited" by unscrupulous school representatives who will recruit students in order to win championships. As evidence of this, OHSAA points to a situation nearly twenty years ago when a school recruited students from overseas to play basketball. OHSAA Bylaw 4-9-2 defines recruiting as "the use of influence by an individual, either connected or not connected to a school, to secure the enrollment of a prospective student athlete," and HB 442 would in no way prevent OHSAA from enforcing this bylaw. Even those who note situations in other states, such as Florida, fail to take into account that schools were violating bylaws that were already in place and that Florida continues to allow F-1 visa holders to participate in athletics.

Members of the committee, there are public and private high schools throughout Ohio that are nationally and internationally known for the high quality education they provide to students. Families from around the world rightfully consider Ohio's schools when making a decision on the education of a student not from Ohio. Parents sacrifice time, treasure and togetherness with their child to give their student the opportunity to receive the kind of education that simply may not be available to them in their home country.

To these parents and students, Ohio, and America, can open doors that may otherwise be closed to them in their home countries. Imagine the hope and optimism that those students must feel when they get to their new school in Ohio, and the disappointment they must feel when they realize that they are to be treated as second-class students when it comes to sports. These students deserve better, and Ohio can do better.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.