



Date: Monday, February 12, 2024

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Ken Dillingham. I am the senior pastor of The Lifeway Church network with campuses that serve Dayton and the surrounding area. But more specifically, I am here today as a voice for LEAD Academy, a Christian school associated with our church. I wish to use my voice to speak for the many hard-working mostly lower to middle-income families who make tremendous sacrifices to send their children to our school. These families have the conviction that their children's education includes academic excellence within an environment that catalyzes their spiritual development.

I stand before you today to advocate for the passage of Ohio House Bill 339, which appropriately aims to expand educational opportunities for more Ohio children.

Ohio has a longstanding bedrock belief that education is the foundation upon which our society builds its future. Similarly, our state has underscored the right of families to provide education that aligns with their values and beliefs. House Bill 339 recognizes these core principles and works to provide financial fairness in educational options. By extending funding to families for use toward non-taxed/non-chartered schools, we ensure that families have the freedom to pursue an education that aligns with their faith and values while not being unfairly burdened by paying for their education twice; once through their taxes and again through their school tuition.

This important legislation takes a vital step toward inclusivity while providing parents the ability to shape their children's academic journey. This bill recognizes and respects the diversity of our community while acknowledging that educational choices should not be limited by financial constraints. By supporting House Bill 339, you are advocating for equal access to educational opportunities, irrespective of socio-economic status.

In conclusion, House Bill 339 represents a crucial step towards an educational landscape that reflects and respects the choice of families like the ones who send their children to LEAD Academy. The nearly 70 students of our school represent 17 congregations in our area. These families are the cultural and economic cross-section which paints the portrait of so many that form our communities. Because of this our 2023-24 average tuition is less than \$3,000/student. We are doing our part to make this economically feasible for all families. Beyond that, LEAD Academy is served by volunteers and staff, some of whom formerly served as public school teachers right here in Ohio. They have sacrificed over half of their teaching salary and their state pension to be a part of this vision. These volunteers and staff are also doing their part to make this an affordable educational choice.

And so today, I am calling on you as leaders and decision-makers, to come together in solidarity. I am urging you to also do your part to make this an affordable educational choice. Support this bill in the spirit of our American religious liberty and in the rich tradition of balance and fairness which is Ohio.