

HB 339 Proponent Testimony

February 13th

Havilah Southern

Greetings Chair Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, my name is Havilah Southern. I am a lifelong resident of Ohio and a graduate of Kent State University. I have my Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education.

I have been teaching in my degreed area at Agape Christian Academy, a non-chartered, non-tax supported school since it opened its doors in 2005. I have chosen to teach at Agape because of my Christian faith. I have the opportunity to come along side other Christian parents and educate their children with the values they want their children taught. During my teaching career I have made less money than if I would have taught in a public school, but have continued to do what I believe in. The passing of House Bill 339 would increase income for our school and allow the teachers to get paid a competitive salary.

My husband, who holds his degree in middle childhood education, has taught fourth through sixth grade at Agape in the past. This is an age where boys, growing into young men, need a positive male role model, and my husband was that and more to them. We have relatively few men teaching in our school as typically they are the breadwinners and seek higher pay. Sadly, my husband and I decided that he would need to seek a job that made more money in order to send our oldest son to college. This was a great loss to Agape to say the least. Many families have reached out to my husband, expressing their sadness over the situation and the loss their children feel without him at the school. If House Bill 339 passes, and our school is able to raise teacher salaries, we could attract and retain more male teachers and greatly serve the next generation of young men.

As a parent of an Agape graduate and with three current students there, I have been pleased with the academic rigor and values taught. Because of my Christian faith, I have chosen to send my children to Agape even though they have fewer choices of electives and sports opportunities. Upon graduation, my oldest son had a 4.0 GPA, was able to get into the college of his choice and receive a seventy five percent academic scholarship. He will enter the workforce as a prepared worker who is grounded in his faith.

I urge this committee to consider the value Agape and other similar schools add to our communities and vote to pass House Bill 339.

Sincerely,

Havilah Southern