

House Primary & Secondary Education Committee
Hearing on House Bill 339
Proponent Testimony

February 13, 2024

Chairman Bird and members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 339 which would establish the Non-chartered Educational Savings Account Program. Passage of this legislation is important to correct an unintended consequence of the recent school choice expansion in House Bill 33.

My wife and I are parents of two daughters, ages eleven and nine, who attend Ottawa County Christian Academy (OCCA), a non-chartered, non-public school in Oak Harbor, Ohio. OCCA was founded in 2004 as a service of Grace Baptist Church. OCCA gives area families a faith-based option among the educational options available in the community.

In compliance with Ohio law, OCCA and all non-chartered, non-public schools are required to meet state standards in areas of safety, attendance, and academics. In each category, OCCA exceeds these standards to ensure the best possible education for its students. As OCCA students, our daughters receive challenging curriculum and even compete in academic contests with other schools.

In addition, OCCA employs dedicated and qualified faculty. Every teacher is a graduate of a recognized college and is responsible for obtaining continuing education credits. This ensures that OCCA teachers are properly prepared to instruct in a constantly changing environment. Our daughters are fortunate to be in the classrooms of these committed individuals.

Ohio's non-chartered, non-public schools like OCCA are dedicated to individualized approaches that sometimes are not available in the community, with a focus not only on the student's academic growth, but also their spiritual development. I believe this has important value for the character of Ohio's future adults, and I can attest that OCCA has served an important role in this regard for our daughters.

As a non-tax supported Christian school, OCCA relies on the financial support of its families and community members in order to operate. Due to being left out of the school choice expansion in House Bill 33, parents of non-chartered, non-public schools like my wife and I continue to pay two times for education--first through taxation and then again through paying tuition.

Moreover, leaving non-chartered, non-public schools out of the recent expansion has caused further financial burden for my family and others. We were blessed as beneficiaries of an area scholarship fund that provided private dollars to help support school choice. However, the program was unfortunately cancelled due to a perceived decrease in need following passage of House Bill 33.

The legislation now before the committee would help correct such consequences for many Ohio families including my own. House Bill 339 is consistent with the state's role in ensuring quality education of students, while supporting the rights of parents to choose the best educational option for their children. I respectfully urge the committee's support for House Bill 339.

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