



Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 1306

Chairwoman Lisa Baker, Chairwoman Christine Tartaglione, and members of the Senate Labor and Industry Committee,

Thank you for permitting us the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the significant implications of this SB 1306, and its subsequent impact upon Christian schools. Representing a significant segment of the Christian school community in Pennsylvania, the Association of Christian Schools International PA (ACSIPA) is a network of leaders that serve in schools which are members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). ACSI has approximately 150 member schools throughout Pennsylvania.

Initially, our concerns about this legislation stem from its impact on the school's ability to maintain their religious distinctive as it relates to the employment of teachers that are responsible to fulfill the mission of the school. These schools hire employees who will model in lifestyle as well as in word, the core elements of the school's stated mission. This bill makes it illegal to make determinations about a crucial element of religious beliefs and practice, those dealing with beliefs about marriage and human sexuality, in the hiring process. It removes these schools' right to employ individuals who appropriately believe, as well as live out, the school's mission. We are also opposed to the privacy implications for all of our employees, as this bill will force us to treat a man who identifies with the female gender as a woman for all purposes.

This proposed legislation denigrates the exercise of religious freedom on behalf of the parents and students served through the option of Christian schools. With approximately 10% of all students choosing private education, it is important to allow parents to select school options that are consistent with their faith centered values. The ability to choose employees on this basis is essential to fostering an employment environment that benefits all of the employees; one that contributes to the mission of serving children, but also the mission of serving the spiritual needs of employees. These employees support and encourage each other in their shared faith commitments. SB 1306 presents school leaders with a terrible dilemma: either comply with this statute or comply with the commitment to fulfill the religious mission of the school.

Christian schools provide an alternative that is not only important to the individual subscribing family, but to the greater good of the Commonwealth. We respectfully ask that you carefully weigh the presented concerns above and empower Christian (and other faith based schools) the ability to operate within the current statutes of religious freedom which safeguards the school's integrity of mission. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns, and if there is any need for clarification, please feel free to contact us.

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