

House K-12 Budget Committee

Written testimony in support of HB 2218: Establishing the sunflower education equity act.

Submitted: February 2, 2023

Madam Chair and members of the House K-12 Budget Committee:

My name is Dr. John Walker. I serve as the Superintendent of Schools for Central Christian School in Hutchinson, KS. I also have the distinct pleasure of serving as the Kansas Representative for all Kansas Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) accredited schools. I am also blessed to serve on the Board of Directors for the Kansas Association for Independent and Religious Schools (KAIRS).

I respectfully offer testimony in support of HB 2218 on behalf of our school and these organizations. Thank you for your willingness to have me today.

Christian schools in Kansas offer many of the same core classes that are taught at local school districts. Classes that teach reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies, English language arts, physical education, art, music, and science, all from a Biblical worldview, fostered in a Christ-like atmosphere. And of course, a Bible class. Not only that, but many of these schools are excelling in their work as educators, and many of these schools offer higher level classes, such as dual credit.

Today, I want to speak to the issue of accountability. On behalf of our school, and all other ACSI accredited schools – measures of accountability are in place. There are several accrediting agencies, that are nationally recognized. The Association of Christian Schools International is one of the largest protestant accreditation agencies in the world. The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) is committed to Christian schools and educators believing that Christian schools contribute to the public good through effective teaching and learning, that are biblically sound, academically rigorous, socially engaged, and culturally relevant.

ACSI is a Christian educational organization that advances excellence in Christian schools by enhancing the professional and personal development of Christian educators and providing vital support functions for Christian schools. Through their organization, they offer school accreditation, teacher and administrator certification, and legal/legislative ideas and support. They have their own publication organization that publishes a K-12 curriculum that are academically rigorous and biblically based. Over 5.5 million students worldwide connect to Christian education through ACSI's efforts to strengthen Christian schools and help equip Christian educators. There are over 2,200 member schools in the United States, and more than 3,000 global and 160 international member schools. In addition, 70 colleges and universities also have accreditation with ACSI.

Why does this matter? To make you all aware of the other options that exist out there for accountability through the accreditation process. As a Christian school, we believe our very first step in accountability is that we are first accountable to the Lord. Second, we are accountable

to a board of trustees. Third, we are accountable to the parents – because they have placed their trust in us to train their children in the way they should go. Fourth, we are held accountable to our accrediting agency, because with accreditation, the family and the student is given assurance that their child will receive a quality education by the courses they take.

To be accredited through the Association of Christian Schools International, there are several indicators that you must meet before your initial accreditation approval. Once a school has been approved for accreditation, there are yearly monitoring reports that must be submitted that speak to a school's accreditation schedule, current school information (i.e. current enrollment, grade levels served, total number of board members, number of teachers, etc.), any additional campuses that may have been added, faculty and administration credentials, statement of financial practice, updates to our continuous school improvement plan, progress reports for major recommendations from the last accreditation visit, and what you have accomplished over the last year.

I will also attach a link for the ACSI Standards Manual for accreditation, which includes 8 domains: 1. Philosophy and Foundations, 2. Governance and Executive Leadership, 3. Home and Community Relations and Student Services, 4. Personnel, 5. Instructional Program and Resources, 6. Student Care, 7. Character, Values, and Spiritual Formation of Students, and 8. Continuous School Improvement Plan. (https://www.acsi.org/docs/default-source/website-publishing/school-services/accreditation/application-and-manuals/acsi-standards-manual-final.pdf?sfvrsn=fba22639_33)

To sum up what I would like to say: there is indeed accountability for small private schools – and we are just one example of an accrediting body that keeps us accountable, ensures our viability, pushes us to excel academically, and plants spiritual roots to ensure there is no mission drift. With accountability to the Lord, the Board of Trustees, Parents, and to an accreditation agency – there are more than adequate controls to ensure that schools fulfill their mission by offering a Biblical worldview education for their students.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. John Walker
Superintendent
Central Christian School