

Honorable PA State Senator/Representative:

The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) holds a core belief that a Christian school education should be accessible to families and therefore supports the proposed school choice legislation, PA Senate Bill One.

With the resolute position that educational choice supports parents in their defining care giver role to choose the best educational program for their child, ACSI endeavors to speak with a viable and authoritative voice in this all important school choice issue.

Enclosed within this packet, and for your review, are several testimonies from educators that are representative among ACSI member schools. The heart and passion of these testimonies capture the essence of the ACSI core belief for school choice.

The Pennsylvania school code, in section 1327, states:

"It is the policy of the Commonwealth to preserve the primary right and obligation of the parent or parents, or person or persons in loco parentis to a child, to choose the education and training for such child."

ACSI is committed to developing a learning community among its schools that reflect economic and social diversity. Unless there is an initiative that advocates on behalf of the economically disadvantaged, we do a disservice to those who desperately desire a school choice alternative for their child, an alternative that is different than the public school system.

Please consider your responsibility as an elected official to represent a significant constituency that is crying out for this option of school choice for their child. You have the unique opportunity in the history of Pennsylvania to step forward and to make your voice heard on behalf of an under-represented majority.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the school choice position of the enclosed statements, and for meeting with us this day.

Respectfully Yours,

David Hegedus
ACSI Associate Director

Rod Paige, Former Secretary of Education, in a speech, stated that "...it is unacceptable to waste a child's life, to treat a child as unimportant or marginal, or to simply pretend the child is invisible." Then he asks, "Who among us would condemn a child to an inferior education? Which child? Who's child?" As embarrassing as these questions are for our nation, they are ones for which we have answers. In my own city of Philadelphia, like the cities across our nation, the children condemned to an inferior education are poor, Black, and Latino children. They are condemned because the schools they must attend in their neighborhoods are failing on every front. They are condemned because they have no choice in the matter.

Who among us would condemn our child to a school in which the majority of the students are performing below grade level? What parent or grandparent among us would condemn our child to a school that will leave her well behind her suburban or international peers? None would desire to condemn their child, but some live in neighborhoods with overcrowded, unsafe schools which lack basic textbooks and equipment, and where the arts program has been cut. These parents and grandparents grieve because they have no choice in the matter. If they had a choice, they would happily move to another school district where the school maintains a reputation of academic achievement and preparation for college. But they cannot afford a home in an area with an acceptable school. They are economically bound to failing schools.

But these parents and grandparents do not give up easily. They call the nearby private and parochial schools, hoping against hope that these schools will save their children from a substandard education. Each year at Spruce Hill, we receive hundreds and hundreds of calls for the very few seats we have open. When a parent or grandparent calls, they almost never ask about class sizes, computers, test scores, second language offerings, or the educational level of the teaching staff. Almost always, their first question is, "What is your tuition?"

Is this the most important question for a parent to ask? It certainly is! Let me rephrase the question: "Dr. Cohen, what is the cost of your school for one year? Can I keep a roof over my family and provide an adequate education for my child? Dr. Cohen, can I provide my child with medicine and a school environment where she feels safe and stimulated to learn? Dr. Cohen, can I afford food and heat in the winter and provide my child with an education that will prepare him for a life full of the choices I lack?"

At Spruce Hill Christian School and City Center Academy, we believe that parents should not have to make these choices. So we step up to the plate, offering a college preparatory education to any qualified

student, regardless of their ability to pay. How do we do it? We do it by asking parents to pay some of the tuition from their already stretched resources, by paying highly professional teachers far less than they could make in the public sector, and by relying on the generosity of supporters: businesses, churches, foundations, and individuals. This year alone, our supporters will provide \$750,000 to educate our students. So much work year after year – is it worth it?

You bet! You cannot imagine the face of a grandmother living on a fixed income, raising three grandchildren and facing a \$15,000 tuition bill, when she is told we have scholarship available and all she will need to pay is \$40 a month for ten months (\$400 a year) for all three children. You should see the tears of joy when a single mother, working full time and attending University at night to become a nurse, learns that all she will need is \$200 a month to educate her two boys. It's better than Christmas morning.

These are the choices parents want to make. In the city of Philadelphia -- where the ideal of freedom gave birth to a nation that fundamentally believes that all people deserve the freedom to choose for themselves and their children -- far too many are choiceless. Pennsylvania's Educational Tax Credit (EITC) has been a great source of funding for non-public schools that are committed to parents having choices. At Spruce Hill Christian School and City Center Academy we have awarded \$328,000 to 140 low income students or about 54% of the student population.

The business community, legislators from both parties and of course parents has heartily embraced this program. In Pennsylvania, the EITC has created real choices for people who lacked choices. It is an enormous step in the right direction. But the work is not over. Together, we must keep working eagerly for the day when every parent and grandparent, regardless of economics, race, or neighborhood, will be free to choose a school that will educate their children well, preparing them for college and a lifetime of good citizenship.

Seth R. Cohen, Ed.D.

Headmaster

Spruce Hill Christian School

City Center Academy

Kathy A. Keafer, Administrator

Johnstown Christian School, Hollsopple, PA

Testimony Before the Pennsylvania General Assembly House Democratic Policy Committee

April 7, 2011

Chairman Sturla and members of the Democratic Policy Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address you today on this important matter of school choice.

My name is Kathy Keafer and I currently serve as Administrator at Johnstown Christian School. I hold a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology from Regent University and also serve as an adjunct professor in special education with Liberty University.

I have been involved in Christian education since 1980 when I was assigned to serve Johnstown Christian School as a speech and language therapist working for Intermediate Unit 08, an entity within the public education system in Pennsylvania. What I discovered inside the doors of Johnstown Christian School was so compelling that 6 years later my husband and I chose to send our oldest child for kindergarten. While the opportunity and ability to have our three children attend a Christian school for all of their elementary and high school years resulted in 3 young adults fully prepared for college and grounded in a traditional and service-oriented lifestyle, that story is not the primary reason I have come to meet with you today.

Shortly after joining the family at Johnstown Christian School in 1986, the administration of the school began to recognize the need to better serve students who were struggling academically. Because I held a master's degree in special education, I was asked to join the school staff to help develop a program that would assist these students. What has resulted is a continuum of services for students with varying types of learning differences.

Currently Johnstown Christian has 220 students with 13% of those on 504 plans to ensure that children with disabilities have equal access to education as required by the American with Disabilities Act. Our student body has embraced children with learning disabilities, autism, Down Syndrome, ADHD, physical limitations and emotional disorders. Services are provided following a Response to Intervention type model with both in-class and pullout possibilities. Students who are identified as needing more intense or small group instruction receive reading and math intervention from either our Act 89 teacher provided by the Intermediate Unit or our school funded resource room. Elementary students needing tutorial help can receive this assistance with a Title 1 teacher. However, the intervention that has been most impactful is provided by our Discovery program.

The Discovery program is a model of intense academic and perceptual intervention for which training is provided by the National Institute for Learning Development (NILD) based in Norfolk, VA. At Johnstown Christian we have seen children's lives and abilities to learn forever changed for the better as a result of this intervention. For 5 years, I served as the Research and Curriculum Director of this international organization where I helped to develop intervention methods and materials now widely used in

hundreds of Christian schools across the country. Because of that position, I have visited many private schools where I have seen quality intervention offered in professional and nurturing environments. More specifically for this discussion, I have visited nearly 30 Christian schools across Pennsylvania providing in-service training and consultative services. In doing that, I have had the privilege to meet many teachers committed to serving students with special needs within Christian schools. With one of the concerns about offering school choice through a voucher system being that private schools do not welcome students who learn differently, I am here to tell you that many schools are well prepared to accept and educate students of not only varying backgrounds, but also of varying learning abilities. I have visited schools that not only employ the NILD program, but also use the same best practice methods of intervention found within public education including Wilson Reading, Reading Recovery, Orton-Gillingham and the Barton system.

Another concern of many who would oppose school choice is that private schools do not have the same accountability as public schools. This may be a technically accurate statement, but it is misleading. While we do not subscribe to the SAME accountability system, we do have systems of accountability. Our students participate in standardized testing and those scores are used to help us determine who is achieving at appropriate levels, who we might want to consider for participation in enrichment programs, and which students might be in need of intervention services. They also help us as a school determine overall if our program is meeting the academic expectations according to the educational standards developed by the state of Pennsylvania. But even more importantly, those scores inform parents and guardians if their children are achieving. Accountability for the program of a school and the success of the students more rightly belongs to the parents who send their children there and parents should have the right to choose a school where their children can find success.

Many parents across the state do exercise the right to choose the school their children will attend and are fortunate because they have the means to do so. Mary's parents exercised that right to choose a different school when at the end of 4th grade she still could not read. Today Mary holds a master's degree and helps elementary children who struggle as she did. Ed's parents exercised that right when in 9th grade he had become such a victim of bullying that he needed not only medication for his diagnosed ADHD, but also medication for depression. Today Ed has graduated from a music conservatory and performs regularly at the National Cathedral and other venues in Washington D.C. How many Marys and Eds are out there who need a different method of teaching or a fresh start with a different peer group and their parents are unable to afford that opportunity. School choice puts the decision of what school is right for a child in the place where that decision should be, in the hands and hearts of their parents or guardians. If schools are not properly equipped or staffed to meet the needs of their children, parents of all socioeconomic levels should be able to make a different educational choice. This right should not just fall to the parents of those who are economically advantaged.

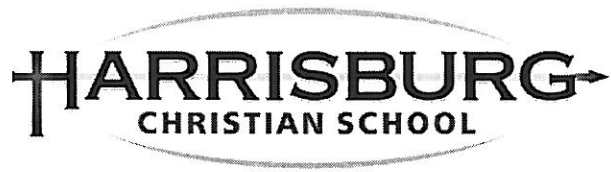
Johnstown Christian School has successfully educated students in Cambria and Somerset counties for 66 years. We are accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International as well as the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Our teachers all hold bachelors or master's degrees and are certified by either the state of Pennsylvania or ACSI with both entities requiring on-going professional development. Today we are able to offer not only a complete array of intervention

services but also a complete academic program including teaching Spanish along with the traditional academics in the elementary years, 8 high school classes that are dual enrolled with our local community college, and technology, fine arts, shop, and family and consumer science classes across all grade levels and we do this for less than the per pupil cost of the local public schools. Over the last 5 years an average of 92% of our graduates has pursued higher education.

Approximate 25% of the student body at Johnstown Christian would qualify for free and reduced lunches if they attended a different school. We are able to welcome their families to JCS because we can offer tuition assistance as a result of the dollars provided on our behalf to the ACSI scholarship program, the Children's Tuition Fund, through the EITC Program. We have greatly appreciated the opportunity to serve these lower income students and the EITC scholarship program has made that possible. However, we would like to be able to offer this opportunity to more families and fill the more than 50 empty chairs that are awaiting those students at JCS.

Education across the state of Pennsylvania has come to a difficult crossroads. In many cases, costs continue to rise while achievement continues to falter. Senate Bill 1 indicates that the Opportunity Scholarships and increased EITC funding "*will foster development of a more capable and better-education work force and will better enable the Commonwealth to fulfill its obligation of providing children with the opportunity to receive quality education.*" In a free enterprise system we must agree with this. Regardless of income, parents are able to freely choose their family doctors, the stores in which they shop, the athletic and fine arts programs they wish to pursue, and the churches in which they would like to worship. But they are not free to choose the type of education or the school in which they believe their children will receive the best education unless their income makes that possible. It is time to allow free enterprise to bring potential improvement to education across the state and place the right of school choice where it belongs, in the hand of all parents, regardless of socioeconomic level because it is parents who best understand their children and their educational needs. Private schools are ready to open their doors to families who have heretofore been unable to choose an alternative to public education.

Thank you for your consideration.



**House Democratic Policy Committee Written Testimony
Submitted by Philip G. Puleo, Head of School, Harrisburg Christian School
On Thursday, April 7, 2011 -- Room 418 Main Capitol Building**

Chairmen Sturla and Members of the Democratic Policy Committee, I am thankful for the opportunity to voice support for a parent's right to choose their child's education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

My name is Phil Puleo and I serve as the Head of School of Harrisburg Christian School, a regionally accredited K-12 academic community that has served children in four counties for over half a century. Our mission is to help students explore their God-given talents, excel in both learning and in life, and to engage and make a difference in their community and in their world.

It's those students that motivate me to encourage you to support legislation that allows parents to fulfill their fundamental responsibility and their God-given mandate to educate their children. Let me tell you about one of those students. For the sake of her privacy I will call her Nora. Nora and her family are native Egyptians who hold to the Christian faith. As Coptic Christians, Nora's family came to the United States in 2004 in search of religious freedom and economic hope. Unfortunately, as Arab children in America following 9-11, Nora and her brothers experienced some unfortunate harassing and harmful incidences in the public school in which they enrolled. Let me note here that I mention these incidences so that you understand Nora's experience not to disparage my educational colleagues and friends who serve in the public school system. I admire their efforts, unprecedented in the world, to fully educate every American child regardless of economic status, racial background, and academic capability.

As a result of Nora's experience, her family sought out help from the Center for Champions, a community organization on South 13th Street that seeks to assist at-risk families in economically depressed sections of Harrisburg and Steelton. In turn, the Center for Champions sought out help from Harrisburg Christian School.

In 2005, Nora enrolled in HCS in 6th Grade. At the time of her enrollment at HCS, Nora was three grade levels behind and scoring in the 2nd percentile in reading. Today, as an 11th grader, Nora is reading at grade level and has plans to dually enroll at both Harrisburg Christian School and Harrisburg Area Community College next year.

I tell you about Nora's life changing experience at Harrisburg Christian School not because HCS, or any other private or public school, is a panacea for all that disappoints us about education or eases our anxiety about the ever changing world that our children will live in. Rather I tell you

about Nora because it represents how when given a choice a community of parents, students, educators, legislators, and civic leaders can provide a child hope and opportunity for success. Let me for a moment tell you about the quality, accountability, diversity, and community of private schools like Harrisburg Christian School.

Nora is receiving a quality education at Harrisburg Christian School. HCS offers 10 Advanced Placement courses and opportunities for on-line learning and dual college enrollment. We have had the privilege of educating 18 National Merit Finalists and Commended Scholars in the past 18 years and 10 AP Scholars in the past 6 years. Our choir has sung at Walt Disney World and at the Annual Fraternal Order of Police Memorial Service. Our athletic teams regularly compete for Conference championships and in the District Playoffs.

How do I know that Nora is receiving a quality education at Harrisburg Christian School? First, I know that because students at Harrisburg Christian School are regularly tested using nationally recognized normative assessments. In Grades K, 3, 5, 8 students take the full battery of the Stanford 10 Achievement Test while in High School students take the ACT Plan test, the PSAT, ACT, SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and AP Exams. Secondly, we know that HCS offers a quality education because parents and regionally accrediting organizations such as Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the Association of Christian Schools International not only confirm the quality of education but serve as a mechanism for accountability to ensure the quality of education. While John has spoken to this issue from an accrediting agency perspective, allow me to focus on the accountability provided by parents. And if you don't think parents hold me and my teachers accountable for the education we offer, you have never sat in my chair or taught in one of my classrooms. As a legislator, your constituents assess your work and hold you accountable every other year at the voting booth. I wish I was so fortunate. Parents, as customers who are electing to purchase the product of education from an educational organization, can hold HCS accountable every time they come in to voice a concern or each month when they choose to pay their tuition. My reality is this . . . at any time they choose, a parent can walk into my office, withdraw their child, and save the amount of money they pay monthly on tuition. Unlike my public school counterparts, I do not get to keep their tuition when they decide to educate their child somewhere else. Furthermore, if a parent wants to hold a public school accountable they can do so only at the expense of thousands of dollars for an alternate educational option.

Some would say, OK, Phil, I get that that HCS offers a quality educational experience and is held accountable by parents and regional accrediting agencies, but isn't it true that schools like yours succeed because it is able to choose the very best students to enroll? Unfortunately that is a misrepresentation of our school's mission and the devaluing of the efforts of teachers that personally sacrifice to offer a quality education to students. At HCS, it is true that we enroll families who hold to the Christian faith. Other than that, we have a wide range of students from the National Merit Finalists to the ones like Nora that struggle academically . . . HCS has students across the social-economic spectrum from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.

While issues of quality, accountability, and diversity are important, if you take anything from Nora's experience take this . . . education is a community effort. It always has been and it needs to be seen as that once again. For Nora it began with loving parents who wanted to

choose the best educational environment for their child . . . it included teachers who created individualized lessons and spent many extra hours over the years in educational support . . . it took a civic group, the Center for Champions, which provided support to the family and extra tutoring for Nora . . . It took public school support through special services using the I.U. and government and school support through scholarship money provided by generous businesses through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit and additional scholarship monies from generous donors and caring contributors. Nora's success is a tragedy if anyone of those groups failed to play its role or if anyone of those groups overstepped its responsibility and attempted to perform the responsibility of the other. In 1986, Hillary Clinton spoke to the Democratic National Convention in what has become known as the "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child" speech where she said that all components of a society -- families, schools, government and business -- were important in raising a child. She spoke about a "network of relationships and values that connect us and bind us together."

"A network of relationships that connect us" . . . She was talking about Nora. The partnership of parents and schools, government and business, civic organizations and houses of worship. For one purpose . . . the successful education of a child.

The reality is when the lights of this hearing room are dimmed and we all go back to our offices, we all want the same thing. We want our children to have the very best education possible and we want to do everything we can to assure their success. I've got bad news for all of us, educators and legislators alike. That is ultimately outside of our control. The reality is that neither the school house or the State House can parent a child. Neither of us have control over a culture that teaches kids that bouncing a ball or singing on American Idol is the best path toward success and happiness.

Hilary Clinton said that it is the "role of government to support families as they cope with the moral, social and economic stresses of caring for children." I ask this of your caucus. Support families. Give them a realistic opportunity to choose the education best for their child. As educators and legislators we have the best intentions when we write curriculum and create laws and it is right that we do so. But in the end, our job is to provide parents with the best opportunity to educate their children. We must give them the opportunity to fulfill this responsibility by providing them the practical means to choose their child's education. Let parents choose . . . they love their child more. Let parents choose . . . they know their child best. Let parents choose . . . they hope for their child more. Vouchers are not a panacea for what worries us the most. It is simply another tool in the educational tool box. A tool box that contains schools both public and private, cyber and traditional, college-preparatory and vocational. Schools of different missions, of different faiths and beliefs, of varying appeals. A tool box that includes government and private business, civic organizations and houses of worship. Together we can provide children with a variety of avenues for children to reach their God-given potential. Supporting school vouchers will provide parents, like those of Nora, throughout the Commonwealth to best meet the educational needs of their children.

Chairman Sturla and Members of the House Democratic Policy Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on behalf of school choice.

My name is Phil Gernovich, and I have been the Principal and now Headmaster of Erie First Christian Academy for seven years.

Many students have benefitted greatly from attending Erie First Christian Academy. We are a private Christian school that started in 1993 with a vision to educate young people in developing a world-view that is distinctively Christian. We are a unique academy that is currently educating 257 students from early education to high school seniors. We represent 225 community students and 32 students from ten different countries. We provide housing to our boarding students.

We are a quality Christian educational institution that prepares students for the next level. The students that start here can finish anywhere. We have had five graduating classes. Over 90% of our graduates have or are attending higher education. Over 25% of our students will have college credit prior to their high school graduation.

EFCA is accredited through Association of Christian Schools International and Middle States. We employ 27 full time and 8 part-time employees. All of our teachers have college degrees and/or teaching certificates. All of our teachers receive continued training throughout the year. Our teachers could teach anywhere but they chose to teach in a private Christian school. They have chosen to invest in the lives of young people. We have qualified teachers who uphold state standards and more.

Our school offers core classes to every student in every grade each year. The core classes consist of Math, English, Social Studies, Science and Bible. We offer general and advanced classes. Among the advanced classes are Calculus, Physics, Chemistry, and a variety of AP classes. We are also involved with the Regional Choice Initiative. The RCI program is a dual enrollment program that allows our students to receive college credit in high school. We offer a variety of elective classes as well. Some of these are art, music, driver's education, SAT prep., Newspaper, foreign languages, Financial Peace and computer classes. We offer after school co-curricular activities. These activities include of athletics, clubs, drama performances and musical programs.

School competition is healthy. America is founded on competition and choice. Businesses have succeeded and failed because of these attributes, but the business industry has greatly benefited. It will do the same for Pennsylvania schools. Competition will increase the productivity and test scores in many schools. Pennsylvania school students could do better on the College Board exams. Healthy competition will breed better schools. EFCA does extremely well in this area. We test each student from first grade to eleventh with the Stanford Achievement Test. Each class average is higher than the state averages. Some of our classes

are more than a year ahead. Families should be able to choose the best school for their children.

Our families have chosen Christian education for a multitude of reasons. Perhaps it is for a quality education or maybe the choice is to expose their children to an environment that has God in education. Perhaps parents desire an education for their children with a biblical world view. It is my job to share with prospective families who we are, what our vision is, the quality we offer, the success of our alumni, our core values, what can be expected of our academy. Then families make a choice. They choose whether to send their student here or somewhere else. Sometimes our school is not what they are looking for, and sometimes it is exactly what they desire. People want choices.

Many students have benefited from attending EFCA. Many more students could also benefit if funds were available to them. We are in favor of Senate Bill 1 and in increasing Education Improvement Tax Credit. We live in a Christian nation that allows citizens to choose where they can buy shoes but cannot choose where to send their children to school.

Respectfully,

Phillip A. Gernovich

Headmaster

Testimony regarding Senate Bill 1:
The Opportunity Scholarship & Educational Improvement Tax Credit Act
3/31/2011

Chairmen Sturla and Members of the Democratic Policy Committee:

My name is Bob Gresh and I am the founder of Grace Prep High School in State College, Pa. As a businessman and entrepreneur, seven years ago I took up a challenge to fill a need in the State College community since there was no other private high school within a school district of nearly 8,000 students.

At the time that I went to enroll my son in ninth grade in the public school there were 937 kids in the freshman class and nearly 3,000 in the high school. I was introduced to the two guidance counselors for his class. One was in charge of counseling students with names ending in A – M and the other with students from N – Z. Perhaps it was in that moment I was struck by the enormous difficulty of the public school mission and how private schools with different missions could aid the public schools, not detract from them.

I'm not an opponent of the public schools. In fact I greatly respect what they do and I recognize that there is only so much that they can do. The simple fact of the matter is that just as we, as adults, have different personalities, different interests, different skills, and respond to people in different environments in different ways our children need the same flexibility and opportunity in their quest to achieve their individual success. Not all adults want to live in the big city and work for big corporations. In fact, many forced into this life style would be unsuccessful not because they lack the skills or talent but, simply because their skills and talents are not suited to the environment.

Public schools are a vital resource in our community but they strain at the task to be all things to all people. Certainly I could give much time explaining how I believe my faith and the values we teach at Grace Prep High School are good for the lives of our students, but that is not the reason I need to use to support many of the aspects of SB1.

In fact, I started Grace Prep to show what a small school could do. We have the freedom to hire the best teachers and fire the worst ones. And we have the opportunity to provide the environment that a school with 100 students offers rather than 3,000. We value any occupation that a student feels passionate about that will bring lifelong joy and success.

My personal story is that I was a student with attention deficit disorder and I didn't really like school. I did well in some classes and horrible in others. And so I understand students who feel the same way. Generally these students are known as problem students or students unwilling to be educated. They might be considered lazy or apathetic. But I can tell you with all certainty that these are honestly some of our best and brightest. They are inventors, explorers, politicians and entrepreneurs. And they often fall through the cracks of an educational system not designed for them.

I support SB1 not out of desperation for our current school system, but for the tremendous success that we will achieve when parents and children can select schools that are suited to their environment as you've been able to select an environment where you're successful.

Obviously those of us with resources have that choice. You have that choice. Perhaps many of you or your staff have selected private schools. Why? Because you think it is the best environment for your children to learn and to grow. I've made that same choice and I believe it is honorable, compassionate and ethical for those without our means to have that same choice.

Furthermore, I believe with the right creative solutions, the public school can be aided by the fact that students who attend are there by choice, not by force. Why has Grace Prep been successful in producing a national commended scholar and a national merit scholar among our first 100 graduates when some school districts in our area haven't produced one in 17 years? Why have we produced three Penn State Schreyer Scholars among our first 7 graduates? It is because they made the choice to come to Grace Prep and that has created a community and environment of students working together and being served in a system that conforms to them if possible rather than making them conform to a system.

In my mind, this is an ethical issue.

Will you give students who are poor, disadvantaged and poorly served by the system the same choice that your own children have? I believe the answer to that question should be obvious. SB1 has the opportunity to provide public schools support and clarity for their mission rather than bring them harm.

What we are doing currently is not as effective as any of us would like and I am certain that SB1 is a creative solution that will help us take great steps towards serving parents and allowing children to achieve the fullest access to their potential.

Finally, please allow me to tell you a student which makes us proud. We had a student named Renee who came to us in our first year. She had lupus, was into the occult, and was a serious drug user. She lived with an aunt because her mother and father were drug users and could care less about Renee. We took Renee in because she had no other option. The fact is with this history, she was expelled from the public school.

A large part of our mission is to rescue these kids--kids that are "circling the drain" and have no other chance. Frankly, Renee was a pain in the neck at first. For months we tried to reach into her heart. Slowly, we gained access. She started doing well in her classes (and when I mean well, I mean passing them which is something she hadn't done before.)

She started to respond and make friends with both teachers and students. One day I got a call from the church office, which was around the corner from the school. They called and said one of our students was smoking on the corner and I knew immediately it was Renee. So I asked the question most obvious to me...What was she smoking?!

I was relieved to find out it was only cigarettes. And in an ironic way and somewhat pitiful way, that showed us a great deal of progress. We were happy for every little step.

Renee went to Zambia with us that year as we built a piggery and provided AIDs education to 5000 students in the public schools there. Renee taught students along with all of us there and it changed her life.

Was it the public school's fault that Renee wasn't successful before she got to us? I don't think so. But I know that Renee is thankful today that she had a choice. And I know that she is certain that it saved her life.

There are a lot of Renees out there. You know them and I know them. They have no money or influence. Renee was lucky to have even one advocate. But choice changed her life and will change the lives of millions of kids in the next generation because of your courage to lead.

Thank you.

Dr. Stephen P. Dill, Head of School

Delaware County Christian School, Newtown Square, PA

Testimony for the Pennsylvania General Assembly House Democratic Policy Committee

April 20, 2011

Representative Kirkland and members of the House Democratic Policy Committee - thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address you today on this important matter of school choice. SB1 provides a remarkable opportunity for the children of our state, and I would urge you to support this legislation which will ultimately benefit all Pennsylvanians.

Personal background

My name is Steve Dill and I serve as the Head of School at Delaware County Christian School in Newtown Square, where I have served as an educator for 38 years. My doctorate in educational leadership is from Temple University; and I also serve as an adjunct professor of education at several graduate schools in Pennsylvania. I serve on the board of ADVIS, the Association of Delaware Valley Independent Schools based in Bryn Mawr, PA, and ACSI – the Association of Christian Schools International, based in Colorado with a regional office in Lancaster. I speak to you today as a representative of my school, other independent schools in the Philadelphia area, and Christian schools around the state.

Description of Delaware County Christian School

Delaware County Christian School is a PK-12th grade school founded over 60 years ago currently serving 800 students. I am one of more than 3000 students who have graduated from the school. Our Upper School (grades 6-12) campus is located in Newtown Township on the Radnor Township border. Our elementary campus is located in Eastown Township (Chester County), on the Newtown Township border. The school provides a college preparatory education; over 95% of the graduates go on to higher education. Students who attend the school reside in Philadelphia, Delaware, Chester and Montgomery Counties. The school is far more ethnically diverse than any of the adjacent school districts with a 30% non-white student population, of which the largest group is African-American students. 20% of our student body comes from Philadelphia and school districts from southern Delaware County. We have parents – including single parents – who take on two jobs in order to pay for their children to attend the school. Tuition and fees range from \$4000 for half day PK to \$13,000 for high school. Over one third of our families receive tuition assistance and do not pay full price. Some of those assistance dollars come from the current EITC scholarship program that SB1 will expand.

Delaware County Christian School is not a selective prep school only for the best and brightest students. We accept students with learning disabilities, who with proper support, will be able to function successfully in a college bound program. We have over 100 students who receive

different learning support services, with additional students who have 504 plans. We have graduates each year who matriculate at some of the finest colleges in the country. Current seniors will matriculate this fall at Dartmouth, the US Naval Academy, UC Berkley, UCLA, NYU, along with others who will attend local colleges including West Chester, Temple, Delaware County Community College, and Eastern University. Our graduates are well prepared for college and nearly 90% complete college in five years, nearly double the national percentage.

My purpose in all of that background is to illustrate that our school is one of many in Pennsylvania that is ethnically, socio-economically, and academically diverse – and provides tremendous value to the parents who make significant sacrifices for their children to attend.

In my comments today, I want to emphasize three brief points:

1. School Choice improves student achievement.

There is a growing body of educational research – neutral, empirical studies – that demonstrate gains in student achievement when school choice is present. Although in some studies the gains are small, there are some studies showing significant gains. There have not been any studies that have indicated any negative results from providing school choice.

In a summary study published last month, the author collected the results of all available empirical studies using the best available scientific methods to measure how school vouchers affect academic outcomes for participants, and all available studies on how vouchers affect outcomes in public schools. Contrary to the widespread claim that vouchers do not benefit participants and hurt public schools, the empirical evidence consistently shows that vouchers improve outcomes for both participants and public schools. In addition to helping the participants by giving them more options, there are a variety of explanations for why vouchers might improve public schools as well. The most important is that competition from vouchers introduces healthy incentives for public schools to improve.

Key findings include:

- Ten empirical studies have used random assignment, the gold standard of social science, to examine how vouchers affect participants. Nine studies find that vouchers improve student outcomes, six that all students benefit and three that some benefit and some are not affected. One study finds no visible impact. None of these studies finds a negative impact.
- Nineteen empirical studies have examined how vouchers affect outcomes in public schools. Of these studies, 18 find that vouchers improved public schools and one finds no visible impact. No empirical studies find that vouchers harm public schools.
- Every empirical study ever conducted in those places improved public schools.

- Only one study, conducted in Washington D.C., found no visible impact from vouchers in the surrounding public schools. This is not surprising, since the D.C. voucher program is the only one designed to shield public schools from the impact of competition. There were improvements in the outcomes among the students receiving the vouchers. Thus, the D.C. study does not detract from the research consensus in favor of a positive effect from voucher competition.¹

2. The most important constituency for this issue is students, not adults.

One of the challenges I face in my non-public school environment is not unlike the challenges that you as legislative leaders must face. You have different stakeholders with vastly different perspectives on the issues before you. On a much smaller scale, the primary stakeholders in my decision making arena are students, parents and teachers. Because of the common commitment to our mission, I can usually make decisions that please all of my stakeholders. But even in my small world, there are days when I must choose between what is best for teachers and what is best for students. Public and non-public schools are both operating in a challenging economic environment. We may not have a position for a particular faculty member next year. Or we may have an extra 5th grade teacher and need to hire a kindergarten teacher. Do we automatically put the existing 5th grade teacher into the kindergarten classroom? If teachers are our primary stakeholder, yes we would. If we want to do what is best for the students in the classroom, we will open up that position to the best qualified kindergarten teacher, which may or may not be the current 5th grade teacher. And we may have a very unhappy 5th grade teacher.

The point of that illustration is to emphasize what we all know to be true – schools exist primarily for students, not for teachers. We can't have good schools without effective teachers, but schools do not exist in order to create jobs for teachers. In a similar way, I would urge our legislative leaders to recognize that what is best for students may not be best for existing structures and existing teachers in existing schools. Perhaps that student would be much better served in a different school.

This past October Austin and Jasmine (not the real names of two of our African-American students) entered our school. They lived in the William Penn School District, and their parents did not want their children to attend the district schools. They home schooled for a while but were not able to provide the quality of education that they wanted their children to have. The mother was the primary provider for the family because the father had health issues and was unemployed. They scrapped whatever money they could to enroll and they received substantial (2/3) financial aid. Both children (10th grade and 6th grade) struggled at first, but they worked hard. They made friends and got involved in school activities. I can see their smiling faces clearly in my mind. Because of their hard work, they were succeeding academically. But they could not afford their portion of tuition, they withdrew from our school in late March. I do not know what they are doing for schooling today, but I do know that those children were in tears

¹ Forster, Greg. *A Win Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Vouchers*, Foundation for Educational Choice, March 2011.

because they had to withdraw. From my perspective, they were given a chance for academic and life success that then had to be taken away. I believe SB1 will provide a life line to the Austins and Jasmynes of our state. If this bill is enacted in this session, those students – who live in an area where they would attend what the bill defines as a failing school – would be able to reenroll in the school that they love for the coming school year.

Will SB1 drain resources from existing school districts? To a small degree, yes, and a few jobs may disappear in some districts. But the Austins and the Jasmynes of those districts will be able to receive a high quality education, and the limited resources of the state should place a higher priority on providing quality educational options for many children than the protection of existing jobs. New jobs will be created that will follow student demand.

3. Final decisions for education should be given to parents, not zip codes.

Who is best equipped to make the decision as to the best school for a student? **Clearly parents have a significant vested interest for the best schooling for their children and they should be empowered to make that choice.** Austin and Jasmine's parents wanted to make a choice but current law only gave them one affordable option – the local public school.

Will parents move their students from one school to another on the whims of personal preference? This is not likely, since schooling choices have consequences for a long period of time. Will Austin and Jasmine struggle in adapting back to home school or cyber charter school? Perhaps – but with effort they were able to transition into our school back in October. We have accepted students into our school who have come to us from public schools, other non-public schools, home schools, and cyber schools. Some students have needed extra help to catch up to our standards; others have entered without difficulty.

The primary accountability factor in SB1 is given to parents. At our school, parents vote with their feet each year. If they do not believe our school is providing adequate value for the price that they are paying, they do not return to our school for the following year. We have no hold on them – and if we do not deliver excellence and value – they will leave. We do not have a model that provides resources regardless of the perceived value of services rendered by the users.

Most non-public schools seek accreditation by outside groups, which also provides accountability. Our school was the first Christian school accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (1960) and has been maintained since then. We have also maintained accreditation from the Association of Christian Schools International since 1988.

In conclusion, let me repeat that SB1 will provide a significant opportunity for students to access quality education. It could make a difference for thousands of students in our state. Thank you. I would be happy to respond to any questions.

**Samuel D. Siple, President
Eden Christian Academy – Pittsburgh, PA**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

March 23, 2011

Chairman Sturla and members of the House Democratic Policy Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on behalf of school choice.

My name is Sam Siple, and I serve as the president of Eden Christian Academy. I also am the founding coordinator of PittsburghChristianSchools.net, a consortium of 24 faith-based schools in the area, and I am an appointed district representative to the Northeast Region of the Association of Christian Schools International, an accrediting and membership organization for over 5900 schools worldwide.

Eden is the largest private Christian school in western Pennsylvania and the second largest in the state. Our school, which was founded in 1983 with just 35 students, today has grown to an enrollment of 620 students from 3-year-old Prekindergarten through 12th grade. This growth, especially in the past four years (in spite of the recession) is indicative of not only the mounting desire of parents seeking educational alternatives for their children, but also the quality of the educational programming we provide.

Eden Christian Academy primarily serves the North Hills area of Greater Pittsburgh across three campuses: an elementary campus in Ross Township and one in Wexford, and an upper school campus for grades 7-12 in Ohio Township. Our students, however, come from 26 local public school districts. Eden is a school established to partner with Christian parents seeking an educational experience that supports their families' values, although we are independent of any particular church or denomination. As a matter of fact, our families represent a diversity of over 100 local congregations.

The diversity at our school is also socio-economic. We have a healthy mix of students coming from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, whose parents range from CEOs and professional athletes, to retail workers and ministers. It is those, however, (as Scripture would put it: "the least of these") who can least afford to send their children to a school such as Eden and who will benefit the most from a voucher program in our Commonwealth.

It is not a stretch to see the correlation between low-income families and under-performing public schools. However, we encounter regularly families who feel trapped—trapped with no other opportunities for their children's education, forced to stay in a failing school because of where they live and because they cannot even imagine how they could afford to send their child to a school where he or she can thrive. Providing opportunities and choice through a voucher that follows the student is their only hope.

At Eden Christian Academy, we are committed to doing the best we can to meet the financial needs of families who desire the educational experience that we provide for our students. We award over \$300,000 annually in aid and other discounts based on the economic circumstances of enrolled families, thanks to charitable donors and particularly businesses supporting our scholarships through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program.

Yet, there are countless families for whom even the most generous financial aid package still does not allow enrollment to be affordable for their child. These are the families who have researched our school to make sure their child would receive a solid education; these are the families who have toured the campus, sat-in on classes, met with the teachers and whose child has shadowed with current Eden students to see that we can meet their scholastic needs; and yet, after being accepted for admission and filling out all the financial aid applications, such an educational opportunity is still out of reach. And these are the people we know of. We will never know of those who simply look at our tuition rates on the website and go no further because they cannot fathom how they would ever pay for such an opportunity without a school-choice voucher.

After the end of each school year we field exit surveys to our parents whose students have not re-enrolled for the following year, seeking to understand what issues may have contribute to their child not returning. We ask about the quality of the education, satisfaction with our teachers, curriculum, classroom resources, and any number of controllable factors regarding the academic delivery and nurturing nature of our school. Year after year after year, we get high marks on all of these indicators, but the leading reason families cite for not coming back is not a dissatisfaction with their experience, but it is affordability. As one mother wrote on her questionnaire: "It breaks our heart that our daughter won't be coming back to Eden. She has flourished academically and spiritually during her time there. We have sacrificed personal expenses and taken extra jobs to afford the tuition, but we just cannot do it any longer. Unfortunately, she will be going back to [our public school], where we can only hope she does as well, but I doubt it." Parent testimonials like this are fairly typical of any number of Christian schools in our state.

Please do not misinterpret my testimony. This is not about pitting private schools against public schools, and categorically posturing that one is always superior to the other. However, this is about empowering citizens of this Commonwealth who have a moral obligation (if not a legal right) to decide what the best educational approach is for their children, especially those children with limited opportunities who cannot afford any other choice because their tax dollars are being confiscated to the local public school — even if their children don't attend there.

Eden Christian Academy, like other Christian schools in Pennsylvania, is not a *refuge* for those fleeing from bad neighborhoods and bad schools; rather, we stand ready as a *resource* for families who desire an educational experience that is aligned with their faith and a desire for their kids to grow in knowledge and character. I remind our faculty and staff that because we are not a default for parents but they must choose to send their kids to our school, all the more we must provide an education that is of greater value and benefit — for why else would somebody decide to pay good money for the same education they can get at their local public school at no additional cost.

I am not a constitutional lawyer nor am I an elected official, so I will not even attempt to debate the propriety of the language in Senate Bill 1; however, as the chief executive officer of Eden Christian Academy, I can attest to some of the misconceptions and presumed fallacies about schools like ours, such as accountability, standards, and accessibility.

First, accessibility. I have heard it said that even if parents wanted to use a voucher to send their child to a non-public school, “there’s no room at the inn.” As of this date, our school has capacity for an additional 305 students and a waiting list of teachers who would love to come to work for us to teach these children. I know of no other Christian schools around that have every seat filled.

Second, accountability standards. As I stated earlier, *because* we are a non-public school (not in spite of it) where parents make a conscious and sacrificial choice to enroll their children, all the more that we must meet and exceed the educational standards of the state. Moreover, Eden Christian Academy is dually accredited, not just by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (accrediting the broadest spectrum of educational institutions in our region that the highest standards), but we are also accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International (requiring we meet the academic as well as the spiritual, social, and emotional needs of our students for a well-rounded education).

Eden insists that every teacher must hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree, in addition to our faculty being state certified and maintaining the ongoing professional development required through Act 48 and ACSI. Nearly 30 percent of our teachers have also earned their master’s degrees in education. Our campus principals have also met the standards of being certified for their positions.

Perhaps the greatest metric of ensuring a quality education is in student outcomes. Through regular and standardized testing and evaluation, we can see that our students are performing exceptionally well from year to year. From Grades 1 through 9, student learning is measured with the Stanford 10 Achievement Test, and every year Eden students score in the 80th percentile range for total reading and math.

Likewise, our high schoolers are performing exceedingly well. The acceptance rate of our graduating seniors is 100 percent for those who pursue higher education. From large public universities to prestigious private colleges, Eden graduates are thriving. And through surveying of our alumni, they regularly attest to how well prepared they are for the rigors of higher education thanks to their Eden experience. On the SATs, Eden students outpace the national and state averages. In a 2007 analysis by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* of the SAT scores throughout western PA, Eden’s composite score ranked third highest from among the 170 schools in Allegheny and contiguous counties; that’s not just of Christian or private schools, but also the much larger and more well funded public schools.

I know it has been argued that private schools like Eden are able to show higher scores because we are highly selective, not accepting of students with special needs. While it is true we cannot accommodate the most severe disabilities because of limited funding, Eden is able to meet the needs of many students requiring remedial and therapeutic services with our Discovery Program, through which our specially trained teachers are certified by the National Institute for Learning Disabilities.

In summary, may my testimony be representative of the commitment of schools like Eden to maintaining the highest levels of academic standards, ensuring our students are educationally prepared for the challenges of today's world. As part of the Christian school community, we too are prepared to expand our partnership with parents and citizens of Pennsylvania who desire to choose an educational resource that best meets their children's needs. The only thing preventing them from attaining this opportunity is the ability to have their tax dollars support their children's education at the school of their choice. Through legislation that permits school vouchers to be used for such purposes, you can make this a reality for students who otherwise would have no hope.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

My husband, Jeff, and I had our first child in 2000. Shortly thereafter we began to consider where we would send our new baby daughter, Megan, to school whenever she reached age five. My husband insisted that our daughter attend a Christian school. Five years later we contacted Penn Christian Academy in Butler, PA and received information about the school. We were very interested in PCA, but my husband was a dairy farmer, and I had gone from full time to part time at the University of Pittsburgh whenever Megan was born. We did not believe we could send our child to the school of our choice, but when PCA followed up with us, and we expressed our concern about the cost of tuition, the administrative assistant assured us there were scholarships available for families making less than seventy five thousand dollars a year. Jeff and I eagerly applied and received an EITC scholarship and thus began our affiliation as a family with Penn Christian Academy.

Penn Christian Academy's philosophy of education is spelled out very clearly in their Parent-Student Handbook. "The school is dedicated to and passionately believes in the "whole child" concept of educating children, which is educating a child academically, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually." With this philosophy in mind Jeff and I experienced great peace in sending Megan off to kindergarten in the Fall of 2005. Fast forward two years, and Jeff and I were able to send our second and last child, our son, Jacob, to kindergarten at PCA. Our concerns about having two children in a Christian school simultaneously were relieved when we received another very generous EITC scholarship.

It was Wednesday, September 26, 2007, a very ordinary day for our family. Megan and Jacob were settled into school for the year, I was busy working and preparing to decorate for Fall on the farm, and also preparing for a church hayride at the farm that coming Saturday. Jeff was so busy with his Dad working on the family farm. They were chopping corn and filling the silo before the rain began. At 5:30 P.M. the kids and I were eating dinner when my sister-in-law delivered the news there had been a farming accident. The accident involved 41 year old Jeff. Ann drove me over to the barn where I was informed that my precious husband of 10 years had been killed instantly by a runaway silage wagon.

As you all can imagine we were devastated, and I was left alone as a widow to raise our two children, ages 5 and 7. I well remember Jeff's cousin, Rhonda, whose children also attend PCA, asking me the night of the accident if there was anything else she could do for me before she went home to her family. I asked her to pass on the news to all the families of PCA. And oh the peace I had knowing these friends would be supporting us in this terrible trial we were facing. The support was unbelievable: the mums, the stuffed animals, the cards, the tree dedication, the prayers, the food, the monetary gifts, the PCA families that came to the viewing along with the board, the principal and even the kids' bus driver, and the incredible donations to the children's education.

Several people asked me the week of my husband's funeral when I would be sending my children back to school. What a decision to make, but life really does go on, so four days after the funeral, my sister in law Ann and I accompanied the kids to school. I fully expected my children to cling to me the whole day, but PCA

was truly their comfort zone, and they sat with their classmates all day. This speaks volumes about the school, the children, the faculty and staff, because my children like to be at home, and they had just lost their Daddy, but they and I were at peace sitting there with all these wonderful people. Penn Christian Academy so acknowledged our loss and our pain. They grieved, cried, and prayed with us. You see it is hard to compartmentalize our lives as Christians. This all goes back to the school's philosophy of education. Penn Christian Academy acknowledges the whole person, our beliefs and all. My husband and I could not divide our lives into segments. Christianity explains all of life to me and all of tragedy. I have a broken heart, but I do not have a broken faith. PCA has been one of our family's major supporters in our grief journey. I have an incredible peace every school day about where my kids are, who they are with, and what they are learning.

My children are receiving so much more than an education at PCA. We do not have to leave our deepest beliefs and philosophy of life outside the walls of PCA. This is America, and I am so grateful for the opportunity and freedom to send my children to the school of our choice, a Christian school.

My Mom often comments to me what a legacy my husband left our children by insisting they attend a Christian school. Tragedies do happen, and they affect school children all over this country, and it is very hard for children to leave their emotions and hurts at the doors of their schools. I am so grateful God had our kids right in place at PCA when tragedy occurred in our family. PCA was able to freely address the concerns of my children and their classmates as well. Thank you.

Testimony of Kenneth MacBain, B.B.A., M.B.A., M.A.

Executive Director, LOGAN Hope

Presented to the House Democratic Policy Committee

April 20, 2011

Thank you for including my testimony on why we support school choice and Senate Bill 1.

Children in our Logan neighborhood of north Philadelphia go to one of two K-8 schools: one that is on the persistently failing list, and one that just misses the list. Both are persistently dangerous. One of our students left the neighborhood school after she received a concussion and fractured skull while standing in the school yard. Both of our neighborhood high schools are among the 20 worst schools in Pennsylvania, and all the neighborhoods bordering ours have high schools that are also on the persistently failing list.

My wife Anita and I started LOGAN Hope School in 2002, with 17 students, in a 3-story single house. We had explored other options to starting our own school – providing after-school tutoring and summer camp and other activities in our community, tutoring in the local public elementary school, helping another neighborhood elementary school get started. We continued to work with children in our neighborhood who were in 2nd or 3rd grade and couldn't read. We recognized that those same students would be disruptive and truant in middle school, and in gangs and out of the school system by high school. Even among the best students in the neighborhood schools, there was a desperation when they approached their high school years, as many were not prepared to attend magnet public schools, and dreaded the prospect of attending their neighborhood high school.

Now, in the ninth year, we have 61 students from grades K-8 in five classes. Anita and I continue to serve as full-time volunteers in leading the school. We have open admission to the extent our space will allow us to add students; we say to parents that if you are poor and live in zip code 19141, you have met our requirements.

So, our student body mirrors the local community. 93% of our students are minorities. Over 90% of our students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Over 75% of our students are eligible for free lunch. More than 25% of our students would otherwise be in persistently failing schools, and 100% of our 8th graders would be destined for persistently failing high schools. In a Christian private school setting, we have students from Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Mormon, and nonreligious families.

Parents choose this school for the quality of the teaching, for the small classes (10 is typical), for the safety, and for the culture that has 8th graders spending time with 2nd graders in a positive way. We have never had an issue with parents or students objecting to faith-based teaching, chapel, or Bible class. We are a real school family; children generally don't want to leave at the end of the day, and young children often ask if they can stay here through college. We are also a nonprofit organization that raises over 90% of our costs from donors.

For our 8th graders, Senate Bill 1 would be a lifesaver. Parents wanting the best for their children now hope that their child qualifies for a good magnet high school in the school district or wins the lottery to enter a good charter high school. They apply to private schools and hope that they will win entry with financial aid that will enable them to attend. Senate Bill 1 would give these students significant aid to give them more choices for high school.

Senate Bill 1 will also enable LOGAN Hope to serve more students in upcoming years. While we understood that families could not afford to pay the real costs of education, we took Jesus' call to "Let the children come to me" literally, and tried everything to allow more children to join us, regardless of their individual or family background, or their ability to pay. We have seen many children thrive in our setting that were lost in a large school with large classes. But we are definitely limited by the finances from expanding to assist more of the families wanting their children to attend. We are gradually renovating a building adjoining ours that will enable up to 150 children to attend LOGAN Hope.

LOGAN Hope is a street school, a part of the StreetSchool Network, which helps direct our approach to education. We try to focus on the most at-risk population in our neighborhood. We are also members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). We are part of Philadelphia Area Christian Schools (PACS), which brought us the amazing Foundations and Frameworks literature curriculum, and also allows us to work with other schools toward excellent professional development. Among these Christian groups, we are unique in many ways (focus on one neighborhood, large Cambodian component in student body, largely non-Christian family base, economic teaching infused throughout the curriculum). But in putting students first, we are not surprised that there is a need for a variety of schools to support a variety of neighborhoods, families, and children.

On accountability - LOGAN Hope tests using the NWEA MAP testing 3 or 4 times a year. We also use the PSSA. We are beginning the accreditation process with StreetSchool Network & Middle States. Our (few) graduates so far have attended Mastery Charter, Eastern Academy Charter, Central, Parkway Center City, and International Christian. Our retention is excellent, with virtually all of our students return

to LOGAN Hope each year. Our attendance is about 95%. We have an independent board.

The growth of LOGAN Hope School has helped the stability of a distressed neighborhood, as families began to move less often to keep their children here. We are committed to Logan and its economic development as well, trying to use our influence to help needy parents find work, and serving families in a variety of social needs through each student's advocate. We hope that many of our graduates will remain in the community after their college years, continuing the renewal of Logan.

Senate Bill 1 will help children. Our desire is to continue to serve the needy children of our community and help parents make responsible decisions to support their children. We are not competing with public schools or other private or Christian schools; we have never lost a child to another Christian school or to a public school (except for the occasional 5th grader who decided being with his friends in middle school was more important than succeeding in the long run).

Please vote yes on Senate Bill 1.