TESTIMONY OF
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My name is Jonathan Lucas, and it is a privilege to be able to submit testimony before the Labor Relations Committee regarding House Bill 2626. I am an active participant in what can loosely be called the evangelical community here in the United States. My current role is as the Senior Pastor of an independent evangelical church. In prior years I have been an adjunct instructor in history at two colleges, including one here in Pennsylvania. My first job, or as I prefer to say, my first ministry, was as a high school teacher in a Christian school exactly like the ones represented by the Keystone Christian Education Association. Whether serving as a pastor, a college instructor, or as a high school teacher, I have always viewed all these roles as a type of ministry. It is my concern for the sanctity of Christian ministry that compels me to provide the following testimony. Thank you for granting me this opportunity.

The ever-present danger of new legislation is the impact of unintended consequences. I believe that HB 2626 will interfere with the free exercise of religion and that this is not merely a possibility or a probability, but it is a certainty. That these unintended consequences will occur is due to the manner in which HB 2626 usurps the place of Scriptural mandates that are essential to the self-governing of evangelical local churches and the Christian schools which are an extension of these churches. This legislation will make it impossible for Christians to freely practice several long-established tenets of the Christian faith. It also violates a legacy of freedom of religion in America, the roots of which not only encompass the Bill of Rights, but pre-date it by well over a century. It is ironic that the very historical principles instrumental in the founding of the United States, principles that I have taught to college students here in Pennsylvania, are now being threatened (I believe unintentionally) by this proposed legislation.

It is vitally important that this Committee understand the nature of church polity in the typical evangelical church. The majority of these churches are either congregationally governed or federally governed. Congregational government simply means that the ultimate authority for

governing the church resides in the members themselves. Matters such as church finances, major policy decisions and staff hirings are, to varying degrees, subject to congregational approval. Churches that practice a federal polity will entrust more of the decision making into the hands of a governing board, often called a Board of Elders. Many churches have a blended polity, incorporating elements of both systems.

Whether governed congregationally or federally, the belief that all evangelical churches share in common is that it is the duty of both the laity and the leadership (including but not limited to ordained clergy) to be co-participants in ministry (according to Ephesians 4:11-16) and to practice ministry in conformity with the standards of the Bible (according to II Timothy 3:14 – 4:5). We do not recognize a distinction between the secular and the sacred. Every facet of a Christian's life is connected to his or her faith in God. Whether one is a janitor, a pastor, an accountant, a homemaker, a teacher or a civil servant, all occupations carry with them an aspect of sacred ministry (according to I Corinthians 10:31 and Ephesians 6:7). We therefore reject what is a false dichotomy between the secular and the sacred when it comes to a Christian's employment or professional career.

This does not mean we reject the distinct domains of church and state. Quite the contrary. The separation of church and state was championed by American Christians such as Roger Williams 150 years before the First Amendment was written. This separation is necessary if the Christians who participate in a local evangelical church and its ministries (such as the Christian schools represented by KCEA) are to be able to carry out the commands of Scripture.

Like the local evangelical churches from which they come, Christian schools are comprised of professing Christians who view every job as being sacred, and every job as being subject to Scriptural commands. This is true even when one job is considered administrative/employer, and another is considered to be an employee. How a Christian functions in either type of job is a biblical concern. When conflict or disagreement arises between Christians, there are biblical commands which are to govern how the conflict/disagreement is to be mediated or resolved. This procedure is not limited to the types of personal conflict that can occur between two people,

but also includes the type of conflict or disagreement that can exist between Christian employers and Christian employees.

Here is where HB 2626 becomes problematic. The Bible speaks in clear and distinct language about how disputes between Christians are to be resolved. Disputes between teachers and the Christian schools that employ them are subject to these Scriptural commands, too. Whether the dispute is about the interpretation and application of a particular policy, questions about wages, or personal disputes that leave one or both parties feeling offended by the actions of the other, there are biblical duties incumbent upon both parties. When the dispute cannot be resolved by the immediate participants themselves, there are additional steps mandated by Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17). In a Christian school setting, both parties in a dispute are subject to the same standards of reconciliation. The distinction between employer and employee does not negate the mutual submission to Scripture required of both parties.

In my experience as a Christian educator I have seen this process carried out. I have also participated in the mediation process described in I Corinthians 6:1-8. This passage of Scripture is of particular importance in view of HB 2626. Christians are required to mediate disputes by gathering a panel of fellow Christians to act as judges in cases of unresolved disputes. To take these disputes outside of the church through lawsuits or other means is expressly forbidden. Secular or government officials have legitimate functions which are to be obeyed and respected. Mediating disputes between Christian school teachers and the schools that employ them is NOT one of those legitimate functions. Any Christian serving in the Christian school movement, who wants to honor Scripture and follow the dictates of conscience shaped by Scripture, will have his or her free exercise of religion violated by the terms of HB 2626. This I oppose. The reason I have provided Scripture references is to help the Labor Relations Committee understand the beliefs of those who work within the Christian school movement.

On a final note, it is worth remembering that this same type of issue provided the historical backdrop to the influences that led to the free exercise clause of the First Amendment. In the early decades of Puritan Massachusetts, matters of church discipline were turned over to civil magistrates for carrying out any penalties to be imposed. Men such as Roger Williams

recognized that this lack of separation between church and state was unwise and unbiblical. The colony of Rhode Island was established as a corrective to the Massachusetts model. In American history, including the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, it was the Rhode Island model that prevailed. HB 2626 would actually revert back to the Massachusetts model by involving the state in matters which are rightfully the sole domain of the church. It would be unfortunate if the wrong history were to be repeated.