

September 17, 2008

TESTIMONY OF JOHN W. STOREY, Ed.D.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR of the

ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

I am John W. Storey, Regional Director of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). My office is located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. ACSI has 190 member schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, representing approximately 35,000 students. About two-thirds (2/3) of the member schools are direct ministries of local churches. The remaining schools are Christian by design and conviction and they rely on local churches for students and financial support but they are operated independent of specific local church ministries.

Our member schools represent a wide range of doctrinal positions including Presbyterian, Baptist, Mennonite and numerous others but all fall within the definition of evangelical. All adhere to goals and purposes of ACSI which are to "...strive to enable and equip Christian educators and schools worldwide to effectively educate children and young people with the mind of Christ. Thus, students will be prepared for life because Christ, the creator and sustainer of the universe, possesses 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians 2:3). The life and mind of Christ is nurtured in the lives of students through redemptive relationships with faculty who recognize that reconciling the heart and mind to God is the foundation of their work."

House Bill 2626, if adopted, would allow teachers in ACSI schools to become part of nationally organized labor unions. These labor unions, by their very nature and the process by which they operate, would burden, if not crush, the goals and purposes of an ACSI school. They would eclipse the authority of spiritual leaders and grant authority to non-affiliated individuals and groups whom neither accept, adopt, believe or comprehend the Biblical principles that govern our ministries.

If House Bill 2626, or a similar legislative proposal, were to become law, the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board would be allowed to supervise elections and certify unions as bargaining agents for ACSI teachers and staff. The PLRB has the power to issue cease and desist orders and generally to have jurisdiction over our ministries. Such a scenario will collide with the Biblical decision-making process in our schools and the goals and purposes of our schools. Our schools are guided first by Scripture; not culture, business concerns or economics. In other words, if our schools become bound by the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Act, government and secular criteria will supersede the Bible in our schools. If the Bible is not preeminent in our schools, we have no reason to exist.

In reality, government will be thrust into the decision-making process. State administrative (non-elected) bodies and personnel will be deeply entangled in the day-to-day operations and decision-making in Christian schools. ACSI schools will be forbidden, as a matter of law, from following their current practices of solving problems and dealing with issues based on Scripture. Matthew 18:15-17 provides as follows:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou has gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.

If House Bill 2626 becomes law, we will be unable to resolve issues and problems according to Matthew 18. Rather, disputes will be subjected to a “grievance process” that may ultimately end up before the National Labor Relations Board. Even the remote possibility of such a scenario is unacceptable.

Forcing ACSI schools into the collective bargaining process is much different than ACSI schools willfully complying with health laws, building codes, child abuse reporting requirements, etc. These laws do not involve differences and disagreements between and among fellow believers that are to be resolved according to Scripture. Health laws and building codes do not “pit” believer against believer and force them into a system that is unsympathetic and ignorant of the Biblical principles that govern relationships between believers and the relationships of believers and their God.

More importantly, health laws and building codes do not prohibit or impact the practice of our faith. Notwithstanding the language of House Bill 2626 (which purports to prohibit the PLRB from deciding “religious” issues), such a law will directly challenge Biblically established authority and spiritual methods of problem solving. Furthermore, for the evangelical Christian, every aspect of life is spiritual in nature. I Corinthians 10:31 reads: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” No state-sponsored, secular administrative body can separate spiritual issues from non-spiritual issues, and the very inquiry into what constitutes “religious” issues would by itself violate religious schools’ constitutional rights. All of the issues that would be involved in the collective bargaining process in an ACSI school are spiritual in nature.

Also, the understanding and enforcement of health laws and building codes are objective in nature. We may not agree with the details of all such laws, but they can be implemented in an

unbiased fashion. The "collective bargaining" process, by definition, is subjective. It begins with the proposition that both sides must compromise. When it comes to the religious beliefs and convictions of evangelicals, the solution is not always in the middle, and it can rarely be found by secular tribunals.

Finally, although government entanglement and the breach of religious freedom are the most compelling reasons for ACSI to vehemently opposes House Bill 2626, there are economic and administrative reasons as well. Unlike a public school district, which has the power to tax and issue bonds, our schools generally have no way of raising significant sums of new money except by raising tuition which is often counter productive because it will result in a decrease in enrollment.

House Bill 2626 will open the door to an extremely expensive venture. Each ACSI school will have to retain specialized labor counsel and consult that counsel on nearly every aspect of employer/employee issues, not the least of which will be negotiating collective bargaining agreements. The expense will be substantial and the typical ACSI school will have no way of acquiring the additional funds. If the intent is not to destroy evangelical schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do not pass House Bill 2626.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. W. Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.