

KH notes on “prime-sponsor testimony” for HB 26 which would discontinue corporal punishment for all chartered school public and private, by the primary sponsor of the bill Representative Brian Williams who also is the chairman of the House Education Committee for the 2009-2010 biennium:

Representative Williams began by citing statistics on paddling in schools including that twenty-nine states have outlawed corporal punishment in schools (including private?) and that only eleven of the 618 public school districts in Ohio have gone “through the hoops” to paddle (what about private?), but records show only six districts paddled this past year, with one of those having half of the incidence. “Over 600 of the districts can control behavior without spanking.” “It is not my desire to eliminate strict consequences; there are more effective means available including counseling (student and parent), in-school suspensions, detentions, night and Saturday school, and many more.” “I shudder to think of my four grandkids getting spanked at school.” “No studies show that spanking is good, and many show harm.” Representative Williams cited a website to verify statistics on corporal punishment with the address “StopHitting.com.” Mr. Williams stated that there would be two exceptions for the use of corporal punishment: teachers will be allowed to use physical force to protect themselves and parents will be allowed (still) to use corporal punishment in the privacy of their own homes.

In the question/answer time following Rep. Williams’ presentation, Rep. Wagner (who identified himself as a farmer) cited “the Board of Education applied to the seat of understanding enhances learning” (or something like that) and argued for parental and local control. Rep. Williams responded that he believed that the state had interest in passing his bill because of state interest in “child abuse.” Rep. Luckie asked if any studies show improvement in behavior through corporal punishment. (I don’t remember the response.) Rep. Williams stated that parochial schools abandoned spanking years ago. He referred the audience at least three times to his source for objective data StopHitting.com (!). Rep. Hite asked if any lawsuits had been filed against the practice, and the response was an “anecdotal” (without the anecdotes) “yes.” A question was asked regarding the location of the eleven counties, and (of course) the answer was “southeastern Ohio.”

Rep. Huffman asked Rep. Williams if he thought that the reason so many districts had abandoned spanking perhaps had something to do more with “bureaucratic barriers” than simply because districts didn’t think corporal punishment was any longer effective, and Rep. Williams agreed that probably was the case. Mr. Huffman also asked if passing this bill might interfere with the ability of a parent who wanted his local school to paddle to do so and if the possibility of using corporal punishment might deter wrong behavior. Rep. Williams agreed with Rep. Huffman’s points, but expressed that he still preferred the prohibition of paddling in schools.

Rep. DeBose cited that the Bible says “spare the rod and spoil the child,” but that teachers don’t administrate spanking evenly or fairly, and that there has been “a disproportionate impact on minority students.” Rep. DeBose asked if there were students in schools that

were not chartered, and Rep. Williams responded by mentioning “non-chartered” schools. Rep. DeBose expressed something like “we need to do something about that,” and asked Rep. Williams his thoughts on non-chartered schools being able to paddle. Rep. Williams responded by saying, “We’ll work on that next.”

Rep. Morgan asked Rep. Williams the intended reach of this legislation—“where are we headed with this?” Rep. Williams said that “off the top of his head,” 99.5% of the students in Ohio are in chartered schools, but hesitated again that this was just a guess of his as to numbers. “I’m not sure what authority the state has over these students in non-chartered schools, but I will find out.” (The point also was made that Ohio is the first (or maybe second) largest giver to private education.)

KH Testimony before Ohio House Education Committee, March 10, 2009, 2:00 pm.

Chairman Williams, Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Keith Hamblen, and I serve as pastor of Calvary Bible Church, 3180 West Elm Street, Lima, and director of the Buckeye Christian School Association, an association of “non-chartered, non-tax supported” (“08”) schools.” I also am a citizen of Ohio, and I care for all the children and not just the ones in “08” schools.

I am an opponent to HB 26 as it currently reads for three reasons: (1) I believe in parental rights and local control, (2) I believe in spanking, and (3) I am against the removal of barriers to those who would take away one of the most basic, historical, and effective God-given ways to develop the kind of people we want to develop as graduates of our schools. (I truly regret giving opponent testimony, as it is the chairman’s bill, but I don’t think that I have much choice, because of its significance.)

I do represent “08” schools which is a separate issue although this issue brings into focus the need for such schools; that is, that parents with “truly held religious beliefs” (which is the wording in the Administrative Code for “08” schools) may bring up their children in the “nurture” (discipline which includes spanking) and “admonition” (teaching) “of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

I was at the 1994 meetings when the state policy regarding corporal punishment in the schools was changed so that corporal punishment in the schools was banned unless the local boards of education went through steps to implement a spanking policy. I remember hearing testimony from religious groups that “the rod” in the Bible was not a physical implement but that it meant something figurative. I researched that (again) and found that “rod” was a literal physical implement. I asked a professor who taught Hebrew to write a brief article for me on the subject which I still have.

Some see spanking as counter-intuitive. Some seem to see children growing up without pain as good. Some say “violence breeds violence.” Here’s how I would answer these

concerns. Active kids who play outside fall down and have cuts and bruises and learn what it's like to feel some pain. This is not a bad thing. Well-trained athletes don't become that way without experiencing physical pain. Doctors administering painful chemo treatments for the good of the patient are not committing abuse. Children who grow up getting immunization shots don't tend to turn out to be serial stabbers. For a child to learn from an early age that choices have consequences and bad choices have painful consequences is not bad. The One who designed the child told us the best and (actually) the least hurtful way to train them. For a child to learn that lying and stealing and disobedience are wrong from his or her youth through some well-timed and love-motivated spanking is good. (That love-motivated spanking produces benefits in those being spanked is something I think that a number in this room would testify in agreement.)

I would like to see this bill amended to return the right to parents to decide if they want the local school to spank their child or not. To trust the minds of the children to local schools, but not to trust corporal discipline to them, might be missing something, as even greater damage can be done to minds than to bodies. To say that 600 districts have figured out how to handle discipline without "the rod," and then to see uniformed police officers stationed throughout these schools does cause some to scratch their heads at least a little. Those who tend to believe that people are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights tend to think that that Creator knows best how to bring up the children (with the use of the rod). I believe it worked very well for the first 200 years of our republic, and I have seen no convincing research that overturns the Scriptures. (Who is behind this further removal of local control? Have there been problems with the current allowance for this modicum of local control regarding spanking?)

My wife Linda and I have six (adult) children who grew up being spanked both at home and at school, and I am grateful we had that kind of school. We're proud of our kids, and my children today are grateful that they grew up getting spanked. When the one gentleman made the comment regarding the freedom to spank still retained in the non-chartered schools, the comment was made, "we'll work on that next," and the comment was somewhat startling.

Perhaps some (or many) haven't observed the difference between spanking out of love for the good of the child and the inappropriate "spanking" out of anger and frustration. Properly-administered spanking is a beautiful and wonderful and effective means of discipline (for character development) that sadly is being denied children more and more.

I wish my first testimony before this committee could have been more "going along," because I am grateful to each of the ones sitting here willing to serve in this capacity, and I am grateful to you for your willingness to hear my perspective. I am asking you to reject this current proposal as it currently reads to eliminate corporal punishment.

Thank you.