

BUILDING & Battling

A quarterly publication of the



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All dates are tentative and subject to cancellation or postponement.

**AACS National
Fine Arts Competition**
April 9-11
Mansfield

**BCSGO Spring
Donation Deadline**
April 30

**BCSO Elementary
Speech & Spelling
Competition**
May 10
Carrollton

**BCSO Board of Directors Mtg
& Fine Arts Review Mtg**
May 16
Mansfield

A full, downloadable 2-year calendar of events is available on our website.

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Ohio Legislative Update

NCNP advocates voice support for H.B. 339 in Columbus

Nonpublic Educational Savings Account supporters testify at committee hearing

by Keith Hamblen, *BCSO Executive Director*

Twenty-nine proponent testimonies were given to the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee on Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024, in support of HB 339, the Nonchartered Education Savings Account (NESA) bill. An overflow room was open for supporters, as there was standing room only in the main hearing room. Perhaps 150 people assembled from all over the state in support of this legislation.

House Bill 339 was introduced by Representative Gary Click on Nov. 27, 2023 and would create education savings accounts for parents to use at nonchartered schools (NCNP—nonchartered nonpublic schools). These schools were established in

1983 for those with “truly held religious beliefs” after a unanimous Ohio State Supreme Court ruled that the state must allow for such schools.

Each proponent witness was allowed by Committee Chairman Adam Bird five minutes to present testimony, and then five minutes was allowed for cross examination by members of this committee. Pastor Rob Kurtz testified that students were leaving his NCNP school in Mansfield because of the recent expansion of EdChoice, which provided increased funding for parents who would attend licensed private schools. When asked by Representative Dontavius Jarrells (D, District 1) if

See ‘HB 339’ on pg 2

“If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds and instill into them just principles, we are then engraving that upon tablets which no time will efface, but will brighten and brighten to all eternity.” ~ Daniel Webster



From 'HB 339' on pg 1

he felt that the passing of this bill would increase “diversity” in nonchartered schools, Pastor Kurtz answered with a happy and resounding, “Yes! Christians love reaching all kinds of people! The passing of this bill will help diverse and especially economically hurting students enroll who otherwise might find these schools unaffordable.”

A legislator asked, “Why not just get your school chartered and participate in the EdChoice program? This is what others have done.” The answer came that some have “truly held religious beliefs” (ORC 3301.0732) and that it is not right to have a state license (charter) to teach what is inherently religious. Education has to do with knowledge, values, origins, philosophy, ethics, morality, and behavior, all of which are inherently religious. People like John Bunyan (author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*) have gone to jail for refusing to take a license to teach. Many believe that these schools represent the true meaning of “separation of church and state.” Some argue that becoming chartered doesn’t change anything they do “religiously,” and that they will give up the charter if that ever happens, but the response comes that even if this currently is the case, there is the principle of true “separation of church and state.” It is for parents and teaching institutions to determine curriculum and ultimate teacher qualifications, to maintain this principle.

The question of accountability was raised. The answer comes that nonchartered schools are accountable to 1) God, 2) parents (who walk away when they see that their children are not getting the best option), 3) observation by the community (including the general public, the sponsoring church and other faith groups and churches, and the DOE/DEW), and 4) standardized testing. These schools are open to the public and these schools can be removed from the Department of Education and Workforce’s list of recognized schools (and the students can be declared truant). Furthermore, the Secretary of State requires additional documentation, and the NCNP schools comply with state fire, safety, and health laws (which also is documented by the state).

These schools tend to have a high percentage of students who are not successful in their local public schools and who can be given special attention in the



The committee hearing room at the Ohio Statehouse was full of HB 339 supporters during the testimony session on Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024.

smaller settings and by those “religiously” motivated (“to love God and to love man”).

The state estimated that this program would cost up to \$238 million and gave details as to how they arrived at this estimate. (This service is provided by the non-partisan LSC/Legislative Service Commission, the entity also responsible for bill wording and coordination with the rest of the revised code.) Josh Lynn, director of the Buckeye Christian Scholarship Granting Organization, researched the numbers and, in his testimony, showed how the figure is closer to \$57-60 million. One Representative said that this would make “fiscal hawks” in the House take a second look at the bill. (Representative Click and Lynn have since met with the LSC, and the LSC has accepted Lynn’s calculations and has revised their estimate to \$70 million.)

Numerous graduates testified as to the quality of their education and their vocational and societal success since graduating from their nonchartered schools. One testified that she has been serving Syrian refugees in Lebanon, learning Arabic and French, and became a nurse practitioner (University of Toledo), and testified how her nonchartered school prepared her for where she is today.

Others testified that nonchartered schools (which are small in number, under 100 such schools with an average attendance of 80 at the most) remain the only legally operating schools in Ohio where parents get no financial relief, even though they also pay taxes. (There is not universal school choice in Ohio, which seems to be the intent of the current General Assembly.) These nonchartered schools actually save the state money and allow more money to flow to each child whose parents chose to send them to the public school.



By Paul Shaver,
BCSO Fine Arts Director

Two hundred eighty-nine students from eleven BCSO schools competed in the eighth annual BCSO Fine Arts Competition held at Heritage Christian School in

Brooklyn on March 7-8. Collectively, the students competed in approximately 1,300 events including testing, projects, and scheduled events. The buildings were a beehive of activity.

Congratulations go to the students from Heritage Christian School in Brooklyn who won the highest point trophy and to the students of Temple Christian Academy (Howard) who won the highest average trophy. Congratulations also go to Sarah Fickel of Lima Christian Academy and Gage Miller of Temple Christian Academy (Howard) who won the outstanding competitor awards. It was a great competition!

We were excited to see the names of the winners projected onto the wall (thank you to Caitlyn Brady), as well as to listen to some top performances at the awards ceremony. The performances featured an Expository Preaching presented by Ayden Lehman of Temple Christian Academy (Howard); an Instrumental Brass Solo performed by Ben Melvin from Fayette Christian School; a Vocal Group from Licking County Christian Academy, a Declamation presented by Ethan

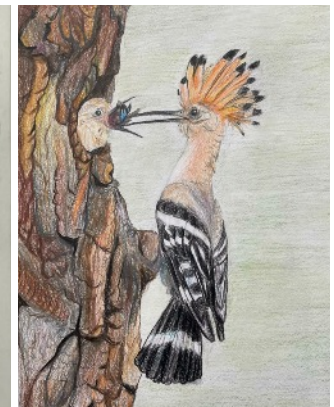
Farley from Heritage Christian School and a Dramatic Interpretation performed by Sarah Fickel from Lima Christian Academy.

During Thursday's opening assembly, Pastor Rob Kurtz, BCSO President, directed our attention to the two on the Emmaus Road who were slow of heart. He presented the following applications: 1) Make observations, 2) Pay attention to details, and 3) Respond appropriately to criticism.

BCSO Executive Director Pastor Keith Hamblen highlighted those involved in the BCSO organization during the closing assembly, and he briefly spoke about HB339 (Nonpublic Educational Savings Accounts).

Thank you to all who used their God-given abilities for God's glory in helping with competition. A huge thank you goes to those students and adults from the participating BCSO schools for their tremendous help in helping the competition run smoothly. A special thank you goes to each judge who helped make the competition a huge success. A special thank you goes to Principal Luke Brown, the HCS staff, students, and volunteers for their excellent work in hosting a great competition. Words cannot fully express the deep sense of gratitude to all who helped with competition. You all are greatly appreciated!

All results can be viewed online
www.bcsoschools.org/fine-arts.html.



Students from eleven participating schools convened at Heritage Christian School on March 7-8, 2024 for the Buckeye Christian School Organization's annual Jr./Sr. High Fine Arts Competition to perform in various academic, music, drama, spiritual, and art events.

The *Building & Battling* newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Buckeye Christian School Organization. Its purpose is to disseminate information pertinent to our member schools in efforts to "build" a good work, as well as to serve as a tool for "battling" to preserve and expand civil freedoms to worship God and to educate our children in the way of the Lord. Articles may be submitted for publication, but they will be subject to editing and approval. All submissions can be sent in MS Word (.doc) or PDF format to: keithhamblen@gmail.com