

Dear Chairperson and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Amar Yousaf, and my wife, Uzma Sher-Yousaf, and I write to you in strong support of House Bill 184, as we believe it directly addresses the challenges we have faced regarding our children's education. We are the parents of Seth and Isabella, who attended a private Christian school (Chapelgate Christian Academy) from 2022 to 2023. We have always sought an environment that honors Christian values and fosters our children's academic, emotional, and spiritual growth. However, an unexpected shift in our professional lives led us to make the difficult decision to withdraw our children from their school, which has resulted in significant hardship.

Below is our story, which we share to illustrate why we believe House Bill 184 is so crucial for families like ours:

**Forced Withdrawal and Financial Hardship**

- Due to new workplace demands, my wife and I found ourselves commuting up to six hours daily to transport our children. This grueling schedule jeopardized our jobs, strained our mental and physical health, and prevented our children from participating in extracurricular activities.
- By June 2023, it became clear we needed to transfer them to a closer school. Upon requesting their transcripts, we learned we were expected to pay for the entire first semester of the upcoming year.
- The school refused to release our children's transcripts until payment was made, effectively holding their academic records "hostage." This policy imposes undue financial burden on families who, for legitimate reasons, can no longer keep their children enrolled.

**Lack of Compassion and Support**

- We reached out multiple times to discuss our predicament and to find an amicable, faith-based solution that would minimize disruption for our children.
- Instead of compassion, we encountered inflexible adherence to policy with no consideration of our changed circumstances. We offered to explore creative options to recoup lost tuition and pleaded that holding our children's transcripts was detrimental to their education.
- We were told by the school administration that per their parent/student handbook, they are obligated to hold records until our first semester tuition obligation is met in the amount of \$12,124.00 for Isabella Yousaf and \$ 17,748.00 for Seth Yousaf
- The school's proposed "solutions"—such as carpooling with strangers (against our principles), enrolling for a partial semester, or making payment arrangements beyond our means—demonstrated a fundamental lack of empathy and did not address our core concern: reducing a nearly unbearable commute and financial strain.

- As Seth Yousaf will be attending 12<sup>th</sup> grade this coming semester, we reached out to school this past month again requesting Seth's 9<sup>th</sup> grade transcript and were told "NO" until above mentioned amount is paid in full.

### **Impact on Our Children's Well-Being**

- Any suggestion of transferring our children midyear was unthinkable. Uprooting them weeks into the semester would have been detrimental to their academic and social lives, leaving them at a disadvantage.
- Despite our repeated explanations, we were met with resistance and a refusal to release transcripts, inhibiting our children from timely enrollment elsewhere.

### **Why House Bill 184 Matters**

- This bill, as we understand it, aims to protect families from precisely the kind of situation we have faced where a school's policy can override a family's legitimate need to seek a different educational environment.
- By preventing schools from withholding transcripts and imposing untenable financial obligations once a reasonable withdrawal notice has been given, House Bill 184 would safeguard parents' rights and children's academic futures.
- Had this measure been in place, our children would have been spared months of uncertainty and stress, and we could have more smoothly transitioned them into a new school.

We respectfully ask you to support House Bill 184 to ensure that no other family endures the difficulties we have faced. Like many parents, we acted in our children's best interests, only to be met with unwavering policies and significant financial burdens. This legislation would help families make educational choices without fear of punitive measures and protect the academic welfare of students during times of unforeseen change.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our testimony. We are available to provide any additional information or clarification. Our prayer is that through this bill, families will be treated with the compassion, understanding, and fairness they deserve.

Sincerely,  
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