

# School Advocacy on HF 853

House File 853, a bill allowing for a tax credit for contributors to a school tuition organization, is being considered in the Iowa House of Representatives. The bill will have a significant impact on nonpublic schools throughout Iowa. It is imperative that **ALL** nonpublic schools in Iowa contact their State Representative, State Senator and the Governor **this week** to ensure that the bill passes.

## **What the Bill Does:**

HF 853 provides scholarships to children from low and middle income families so that they are able to send their child to the school of their choice. The bill allows for tax credits to persons who donate to a school tuition organization. The school tuition organization then distributes the donated money in the form of scholarships to low and middle income families who could not otherwise afford to pay tuition.

- This legislation will provide educational opportunities to children who may not otherwise have them.
- It will encourage the growth in our schools and may reduce the growing number of consolidations and closings of nonpublic schools across the state.
- It will ensure that hundreds of teachers and administrators keep their jobs.

This is one of the most important pieces of legislation relating to nonpublic schools in our state's history. Every student, teacher, administrator and parent needs to be involved to ensure that the bill passes the House, the Senate and is signed by the Governor.

## **How you can help:**

### ***Students:***

*Elementary:* Have each class draw cards addressed personally to local legislators and the Governor. Crayons and markers are very effective. Have them write about how much they love school and how they don't want to see the schools closed.

*Junior High and High School:* Have students write letters addressed to local legislators and the Governor about their schools: Academics, sports, plays, volunteer activities, experiences. Have them ask the legislators and the Governor for support on the HF 853.

This may be a great opportunity to educate the students on Faithful Citizenship. Faithful Citizenship is a document written by the U.S. Catholic Bishops about our call as to participate in the political process. [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org)

### ***Teachers and Administrators:***

Write individual letters/e-mails AND make phone calls to legislators and the Governor.

The following positive statements about nonpublic schools are great talking points:

#### ? **NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS – GIVING PARENTS A CHOICE IN EDUCATION**

Nonpublic schools give parents of school age children the right to choose the best educational setting for their children. The system of parental choice is to enable parents –

all parents – to exercise their inherent right and responsibility to direct the upbringing and education of their children.

? **NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS – SAVING THE STATE MONEY**

Total education spending in Iowa is approximately \$5 billion, almost \$6500 for each child in a public school. The bulk of these funds is raised through a combination of local property taxes and state funding. Some 37,000 children are enrolled in the state's nonpublic schools. If their parents were to enroll their children in public schools, the cost to the taxpayers would be an additional \$240,000,000 operationally each year, not to mention the costs of new construction and capital repair. Parents who choose nonpublic school save the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars each and every year. They do this despite the burden of paying taxes to support the public schools as well as paying tuition at the school of their choice. Nonpublic schools are a wise investment for the state.

? **NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS - INVESTING IN IOWA COMMUNITIES**

Nonpublic schools have a presence in over 250 communities around the state. Our schools employ over 7200 Iowans – making us one of the top ten employers in the state. Our schools pay over \$117 million each year in salaries. Not only are we saving the state money, we are investing money into local communities. We are helping keep large and small Iowa communities vibrant.

***Parents:***

Send letters home with students asking them to contact their legislators and the Governor asking them to support HF 853. Include in the letter to the parents:

1. The contact information of your Representative and the Governor.
2. The bill summary listed above.
3. The talking points listed above.
4. A personal description of your own school and how this bill will help.

**How to Contact Your Legislator and the Governor:**

***Representative:***

The bill will begin debate in the House of Representatives and the move onto the Senate. Please contact the legislators from your district as soon as possible. To find out who your legislators are from your District, go to the Iowa General Assembly Web Site: [www4.legis.state.ia.us/find-leg/](http://www4.legis.state.ia.us/find-leg/) Type in your address information. Their contact information should be at the bottom of the list of elected officials.

***Governor:***

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol  
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(515) 281-5211 (Voice)  
(515) 281-6611 (Fax)

You can e-mail the Governor by going to this website:

[http://www.governor.state.ia.us/comments/capitol\\_correspond/index.html](http://www.governor.state.ia.us/comments/capitol_correspond/index.html)