



Old Dominion Association of Church Schools

Report from the General Assembly

January 21, 2019

Dear ODACS Friends,

Here is a brief update about what has been happening during the 2019 session of the Virginia General Assembly.

SB 1095, HB 2458

SB 1095 and HB 2458 began as identical bills that transfers all policy and regulatory authority over childcare from the Department of Social Services to the Department of Education. **Many of you have contacted your lawmakers to raise the concerns that we have published earlier; thank you!**

ODACS has been officially taking a neutral position on the bills, expressing support for the idea of our preschools being considered schools instead of daycares under the law, but also expressing concern about the real potential that the bill paves the way for future government overreach. SB 1095 passed the Senate Education Committee last Thursday morning with only two dissenting votes. That afternoon I had a very good meeting with Delegate Steve Landes, chairman of the House Education Committee and patron of HB 2458. Delegate Landes was very attentive to our concerns and discussed our four major questions with me at length, as well as an alternate version of the amendment that we were proposing.

This afternoon, HB 2458 was considered by a subcommittee of House Education. Delegate Landes proposed a substitute version of the bill that included our amendment. I had a chance to address the committee, expressing our appreciation for the attention to our concerns, but also expressing continued mixed feelings about the bill. The subcommittee passed the bill 5-0.

The Senate version will now move on to the Senate Finance Committee. The House version will advance to the full Education Committee and then on to Appropriations. Please pray that God will give me wisdom and protect our ministries as we continue to monitor this very complex piece of legislation.

HB 1627

HB 1627 is the bill that Delegate Bobby Orrock is sponsoring in response to the recent VDSS inspection program targeted at Religious Exempt childcare centers that do not accept taxpayer subsidies. The bill requires VDSS to prioritize its inspection

resources in this order: filed complaints, licensed centers, unlicensed centers that accept subsidies, all others. The bill was delayed last week and is now scheduled for a vote in subcommittee tomorrow morning. ODACS is supporting HB 1627.

HB 2203

HB 2203 seeks to repeal the sunset clause on the fingerprint background check requirement for Religious Exempt childcare centers. ODACS is opposing the bill on the grounds of Separation of Church and State. The bill will be considered in a subcommittee tomorrow afternoon, and we do expect it to be defeated.

HB 2043

HB 2043 allows for portability of fingerprint background checks from one childcare center to another. ODACS is supporting HB 2043. The bill will be considered in a subcommittee tomorrow afternoon.

HB 1994

HB 1994 would allow VDSS required fingerprint background checks to be processed through local law enforcement agencies instead of through Fieldprint only. The two organizations that have publicly supported the bill are ODACS and the city of Newport News. The bill passed the House Committee for Health, Welfare, and Institutions last week on a 22-0 vote, but it was amended so that it would become effective on July 1 of 2020 instead of 2019.

Thank you for your support and prayers! Stay tuned!

Sincerely,

Dan Zacharias
Executive Director