

MAR 11 1997

EDUCATION

HOUSE FILE 547

BY BODDICKER

Passed House, Date _____

Passed Senate, Date _____

Vote: Ayes _____ Nays _____

Vote: Ayes _____ Nays _____

Approved _____

A BILL FOR

1 An Act establishing requirements for church and Christian
2 schools.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

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1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 299B.1 SHORT TITLE.

2 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Church
3 and Christian Schools Act".

4 Sec. 2. NEW SECTION. 299B.2 DEFINITIONS.

5 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise
6 requires:

7 1. "Christian school" means a school operated by an
8 independent Christian church or group of Christian churches, a
9 Christian religious denomination, or a board of an independent
10 Christian church, group of Christian churches, or a Christian
11 religious denomination, consisting of at least five members
12 affiliated with the church or denomination, which provides
13 instruction to children in any grade or grades from grades
14 kindergarten through twelve.

15 2. "Church school" means a school which is an inseparable
16 part of a Christian church ministry, and which provides
17 instruction to children in any grade or grades from grades
18 kindergarten through twelve.

19 3. "Department" means the department of education.

20 4. "Director" means the director of the department of
21 education.

22 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. 299B.3 RECOGNITION.

23 A church or Christian school as defined in section 299B.2
24 may file with the director of the department proof of its
25 association with an independent Christian church or group of
26 churches or a board associated therewith, Christian religious
27 denomination or a board associated therewith, or Christian
28 church ministry, together with a list of the names, ages, and
29 mailing addresses of all persons of compulsory school age
30 desiring to be exempted from mandatory compliance with the
31 educational and accreditation standards set forth in section
32 256.11, the uniform school requirements of chapter 280, the
33 school attendance and tuition requirements of chapter 282, and
34 rules adopted in implementation thereof, whose parents or
35 guardians are members of the church, denomination, board, or

1 ministry. The director, subject to the approval of the state
2 board of education, may exempt the church or Christian school
3 from mandatory compliance with any or all educational
4 standards and requirements, and permit the church or Christian
5 school to develop and administer a curriculum which reflects
6 the principles or tenets professed by the church,
7 denomination, or ministry organizing the school. When an
8 exemption has been granted, renewal of the exemption for each
9 succeeding school year may be conditioned by the director,
10 with the approval of the state board of education, under the
11 terms and conditions set forth in section 299.24 for the
12 renewal of exemptions for religious groups.

13 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. 299B.4 ANNUAL INFORMATION REPORT.

14 At least annually, a church or Christian school shall make
15 information available to the parent or legal guardian of any
16 student enrolled in the school regarding all of the following:

17 1. A description of the instructional program or
18 curriculum.

19 2. A description of the qualifications of the
20 administrative and teaching staff.

21 3. A statement of the length of the school year and the
22 school calendar, number of days, length of the school day, and
23 the number of periods of instruction per school day.

24 4. Aggregate student achievement data based upon the
25 results of any student competency tests, statewide assessment
26 tests, or nationally normed achievement tests that were given
27 to the students enrolled in the school.

28 The furnishing of the information required in this section
29 shall be in addition to the information furnished to the
30 director for an exemption renewal pursuant to section 299B.3.

31 Sec. 5. NEW SECTION. 299B.5 ALTERNATE ACCREDITATION.

32 A teacher or other education practitioner employed by a
33 church or Christian school which is granted an exemption
34 pursuant to section 299B.3 is not required to be licensed
35 under chapter 272 if the teacher or other education

1 practitioner receives accreditation or certification from the
2 American association of Christian schools and has submitted to
3 the director of the department the accreditation standards
4 subscribed to, and proof that the accrediting organization or
5 association has recognized those standards as having been met.

6 Sec. 6. NEW SECTION. 299B.6 COMPLIANCE WITH SAFETY,
7 HEALTH, AND WELFARE STANDARDS.

8 An exemption for a church or Christian school shall not
9 apply to any fire, safety, physical health, or welfare
10 standards under federal, state, or local law generally
11 applicable to all schools in the state.

12 EXPLANATION

13 This bill provides for the recognition of church schools
14 and Christian schools as educational institutions. The bill
15 defines church and Christian schools to encompass schools
16 organized by and affiliated with a Christian church, group of
17 Christian churches, a Christian religious denomination, a
18 board comprised of at least five members affiliated with a
19 Christian church or denomination, or a Christian church
20 ministry. Such schools may receive an exemption from the
21 director of the department of education from mandatory
22 compliance with the educational standards prescribed in Code
23 section 256.11, the uniform school requirements of Code
24 chapter 280, and the school attendance and tuition
25 requirements of Code chapter 282, and may establish their own
26 curriculum, if proof of association with a religious
27 organization, and names, ages, and addresses of all compulsory
28 school age children whose parents are affiliated with the
29 organization, are furnished. Exemption renewals must meet the
30 requirements of Code section 299.24 regarding the renewal of
31 exemptions for religious groups. The bill provides that
32 teachers and other education practitioners employed by church
33 and Christian schools may receive accreditation from the
34 American association of Christian schools, rather than from
35 the state, upon submitting a copy of the accreditation

1 standards and proof that the standards have been met. The
2 bill does not exempt church and Christian schools from meeting
3 fire, safety, and physical health and welfare standards
4 prescribed by law for all schools in the state.

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