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## **Private Schools continue to push for exception from College Credit Plus requirements**

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Months after the governor vetoed a budget item that would have freed private schools from being required to offer College Credit Plus, groups opposed to the decision continue to push the administration for freedom to choose whether to participate in the program.

The Ohio Association of Independent Schools, Catholic Conference of Ohio, the Ohio Association of Christian Schools International and Agudath Israel Ohio recently met with Chancellor John Carey to reignite debate on the agency's rule-making decision to require all schools - public and private - to offer the dual enrollment program if students would like to take part.

Chancellor Carey said the statute spells out the requirement and it's a state priority to better inform college-ready students about CCP. Meanwhile, the groups that represent private schools argue that it's out of step for the agency to dictate their programs and the rule undermines their independence. Some school leaders don't feel comfortable assigning college credit to courses students have taken somewhere else because they may not align with school teachings or curriculum, OAIS Executive Director Dan Dodd said. Others, such as a handful of Catholic schools, don't believe they should have to pay for tuition and books to take classes that don't meet their religious standards.

"If we think that an English course or a history course is best taught with a small number of students who are expected to do a research-based paper as part of the assessment for a grade and instead the student goes and takes a history course or a lecture hall with 300 students, we think that we ought to have the ability to say that's not the same thing and were not accepting it," he said in an interview.

"If the General Assembly wants to make the determination that every public school should offer College Credit Plus, it's well within its rights, but for private schools I think it's very different especially if the school is being up front with the parents and students as to their participation in the program," Mr. Dodd added. "If a school says we do not want to accept these courses or these credits and they tell the parents that up front they can make a decision as to whether the student continues to attend that school."

There are a total of five students at three schools statewide currently at the center of the debate, according to ODHE.

A majority of schools represented by Agudath Israel Ohio are taking part in CCP and are supportive of it, the group's director Rabbi Yitz Frank said. But, he is seeking a rule change alongside the other groups.

"I do like the program and I think what the governor is trying to do is good, and my guess is that most non-public schools would let students participate, but the few that don't want to do that, I think their independence is something they deserve to have," he said in an interview.

However, Chancellor Carey the focus of CCP and surrounding initiatives has always been on ensuring students and parents have knowledge of the program and qualified students are given the opportunity to take part.

Since requiring public schools to notify students about the availability of dual enrollment courses and expanding the program, CCP enrollment has doubled to more than 30,000 students this year, he said.

"(Private schools) want the control. They want to decide who can and can't participate in College Credit Plus and that's not something we're willing to compromise on," Mr. Carey said in an interview.

"College Credit Plus is new and so we're all learning things that we can do differently to improve upon it. We're not saying there can't be changes, but the premise that students and families have the information and make the decisions will remain," he added.

Responding to concerns about religious schools having to pay for courses and related materials that contradict their beliefs, the chancellor pointed to his previous argument that parents and students are making the choice about which institution and classes to enroll in.

Colleges and universities are also required to screen students to be sure that they're "college ready" and are enrolling in classes taught at a level that's appropriate, Mr. Carey noted. Mr. Frank said he appreciates the administration's goal of making college more accessible and affordable to students, but doesn't think private school students are the bulk of the audience it's trying to reach.

Most students who attend the state's highest-performing and most rigorous private schools are taking classes at a level above some first-year college courses and they're often not in a position where they'll have difficulty affording tuition, he said.

"For those reasons, I don't personally see (requiring private schools to offer CCP) as having the impact that they think it's going to have," Mr. Frank said, adding that private schools catering to low-income students would likely join the majority of others in offering the program if participation was made optional.

Because the parties are currently at an impasse, he suggested that a compromise would be requiring schools to offer CCP if a certain number of students was interested in and eligible for participation.

Mr. Dodd similarly said he thinks "the market ought to put the school in the position to participate, not the government."

There are no department sanctions in place for schools that don't comply with the program rules, Chancellor Carey said. However, a school that does not offer CCP could be held liable if students and parents were to take legal action.