Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee...my name is John Jackson and I am the President of William Jessup University, located here in the Sacramento region in the city of Rocklin and with a branch campus in San Jose.

California has always been the place for people to pursue their dreams. Whether you were born here or come from the other side of the world, the promises of California have always been limitless. We’ve always been free to chart our own course; to pursue our passion in light of our heartfelt convictions.

In a state as diverse as California, there are an endless variety of thoughts, ideas, and ways of life. The life blood of such a society is civil dialogue and respect for each other’s differences. Free conversation in the marketplace of ideas fosters constructive relationships between neighbors and opens doors for greater understanding, even when disagreement remains.

Part of the beauty of the American experience is the foundational recognition of inalienable rights which do not derive from government but derive from our creator. Jessup and other faith-based schools have clear religious convictions regarding gender, sexuality, and marriage. Those convictions extend to all who attend our school and all who are employed by our school. SB 1146 marginalizes students and schools whose beliefs do not align with the views of those holding the levers of government power, creating a society that does not tolerate diversity of opinion, and even punishing dissent from what politicians have determined are the “correct” beliefs.

SB 1146 restricts freedom of choice and limits opportunities in education by forcing many first-generation college students and many students of color – who would be unable to pursue higher education without a Cal Grant – to choose between attending a school that they have chosen or another option that does not fit their unique needs.

SB 1146 is a solution in search of a problem. The balancing of interests in the Equity in Higher Education Act as it now exists in state law has served the state well, as it respects the diverse viewpoints of private and public institutions.

On behalf of the students who voluntarily attend Jessup and schools like ours, the mothers and fathers and family members who support our students, and on behalf of the churches and communities that our students come from, we strongly urge you to vote NO on SB 1146.