



Public Hearing Testimony

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Date:

3-12-07

Bill Number:

7351

Office of the
Superintendent
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Testimony of Dale R. Hoyt
Superintendent of Catholic Schools
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H.B. 7351 An Act Concerning Textbook Loans
Education Committee
March 12, 2007

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 7351, An Act Concerning Textbook Loans.

My name is Dale Hoyt and I am the Superintendent of Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Hartford. However, I am here today to represent all of Connecticut's 147 Catholic schools and the 37,000 students that attend these fine educational institutions.

House Bill 7351 would make changes to current state statute and make it easier for local municipalities and boards of education to loan textbooks to religious and private schools. Current state law allows local municipalities and boards of education to loan textbooks to religious and private schools.

The problem is that the statute is cumbersome for the public school districts and towns to implement. This bill simplifies the language and makes the loan process more manageable.

The proposed change to state statute would allow school principals to request the textbooks on behalf of the parents, would waive the current residency requirement, and would allow our schools to use textbooks that are available from the local book distributor.

The City of Manchester, after allocating funds for a textbook loan program, have had some difficulties in developing a policy. We have been discussing with some local municipalities a proposal to loan textbooks to private and

religious schools. However, some have raised a concern about creating a policy that adheres to current state statute. It is my hope and belief more municipalities will be encouraged to loan schools textbooks, if the statute is simplified. This will obviously assist the many children, especially those from lower-income and middle-class families, which attend our schools.

Parochial schools in Connecticut have long provided children and parents, urban and suburban, an alternative and save the taxpayers of Connecticut over \$400 million. The population serviced by our Catholic schools is primarily lower to middle income residents. Many of our schools currently operate in several of Connecticut's large urban areas and the Catholic Diocese of Connecticut offer financial assistance to many of these students as a means of enabling them to attend these schools.

Ideally, we would like the Education Committee to support legislation that would provide state funds textbook loan program for religious and private schools. This would help Connecticut's children and families, many who are making a significant financial sacrifice to have their children attend a private or religious school. I would like to make members of this committee aware that nineteen states allow some type of financial assistance to private or religious schools for the loan of textbooks and technology assistance and many of these states make a significant contribution. As an example, New Jersey provides \$11.6 million, New York distributes \$28.6 million and Pennsylvania allocates \$22.6 million for a statewide textbook loan program.

It is my hope this committee and the General Assembly will support House Bill 7351 and additional legislation that will assist our Catholic schools and more importantly the children of Connecticut.