



**SAINT
BRIDGET
SCHOOL**

Public Hearing Testimony

Speaker:

RITA BARRY

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Bill Number:

7351

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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 Rita Barry and I am the principal of St. Bridget's school in Manchester. I am here today on behalf of Manchester's three Catholic elementary schools and East Catholic High School and the 1,500 students who attend one of our schools.

In 2006 the Board of Directors of the city of Manchester allocated \$50,000 for the Board of Education to create a textbook loan program. While, we are obviously very grateful to the elected leaders of Manchester, implementing a policy that is in compliance with the current state law has proven to be very difficult.

The proposed change will make it simpler to implement the intent of the current law. The proposed change to the current law 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 distributors used by the local board of education.

As it is the current law requires parochial schools to use the same textbooks as the public schools. Replacing our current textbooks, to take advantage of this program, with different textbooks would require us to alter our curriculum and is an issue of concern to all the principals. As a school administrator, I need the flexibility of requesting secular textbooks that conform with our current curriculum standards and the needs of the children.

All of the religious and private school principals from Manchester would be very comfortable with requesting the textbooks on behalf of the parents and I believe this change would make it easier for a municipality to administer a textbook loan program.

The students who attend our Catholic schools are primarily lower to middle income. Many of their parents are making a significant financial sacrifice to send their children. House Bill 7351 would help many of these children by helping keep tuition affordable and allowing their parents the opportunity to determine their educational setting.

I thank you in advance for your support of this very important legislation.

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