

To Member of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

As the parent of two children attending Catholic schools in West Hartford, I am writing to ask for your support for HB 6627 An Act Concerning a Tax Credit for Corporate Donations to Scholarship Funds.

My children currently attend Saint Brigid School and Saint Timothy Middle School. As such, the State of Connecticut and the Town of West Hartford do not incur the substantial cost of their education. In fact, the 37,000 students who attend Catholic schools in the state save our cities and our state over four hundred million dollars per year! When combined with the savings to the state by other religious and private schools, the total savings of over seven hundred million dollars annually.

The tax credit proposal in HB 6627 would offer tax incentives to companies that want to support education and provide immediate assistance to lower and middle income children who wish to attend private or religious school. In addition, it would save Connecticut taxpayers an estimated \$5 million per year.

In the current economy, lower and middle income working parents are struggling to afford the tuition to keep their children in our Catholic schools. Many of these children are already receiving financial assistance, but this is sometimes not enough help. It is most unfortunate when families find that they can no longer afford to educate their children in the Catholic tradition. Private and religious school enrollment has decreased this year, and any such decrease puts a greater financial burden on the public school system.

Seven states -- Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island -- allow some form of a tax credit for corporations that donate to a scholarship fund. The scholarship funds are used to pay for the tuition of students who otherwise could not afford to attend a private school. In these seven states, a tax credit program allowed more than 68,000 students to attend a private or religious school in 2005-06 and over \$132 million was provided in scholarship funds in 2007.

This program can be of tremendous assistance to children who find themselves trapped in a continually under performing school.

The tax credit proposal in HB 6627 would greatly benefit the students in our religious and private schools. It is my hope that you can support this initiative which will help our schools and, most importantly, Connecticut's children.

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