

State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2011

FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

RE: H.B. No. 6627 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A TAX CREDIT FOR CORPORATE DONATIONS TO SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS.

Good morning Chairman Daily, Chairman Widlitz, Ranking Member Roraback, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Raised Bill 6627- *An Act Concerning A Tax Credit for Corporate Donations to Scholarship Funds.*

This proposal will create tax credits for corporations that donate to scholarship funds. It will help provide options for our children, protect our schools and relieve the mounting burden that is overwhelming our public school system.

During the last days of legislative session in 2010, I presented this concept, in the form of an amendment on the floor of the House; unfortunately, the amendment failed on a 98 to 44 vote despite having almost 50 co-sponsors from both parties. We also had support from 12 Mayors, including those from major cities and another dozen organizations including the NAACP. I am hoping that HB 6627 can succeed where that amendment failed.

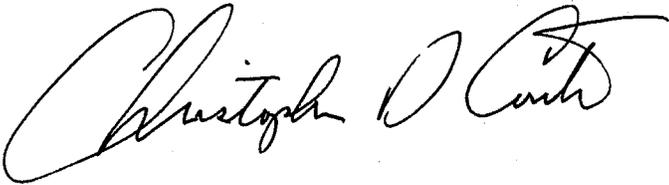
I believe opponents unfairly criticized this bill for providing false hope and harming funding for our public schools. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As many of you know, Connecticut is currently in the middle of an educational crisis. The burden of state and federal mandates, coupled with the huge budget deficit, has made it difficult to provide the necessary funding for our schools. As President Obama stated, "This is the time for innovation and creativity." Numerous studies, conducted by prestigious universities such as Harvard, Stanford, Cornell and Princeton, show that proposals similar to this have bolstered student achievement and graduation rates. It is this kind of out-of-the-box thinking that we badly need.

In other states, various forms of a corporate tax credit scholarship programs have resulted in savings to taxpayers. Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are just some of the examples of states that have realized budgetary savings.

During the past 10 years, dozens of our private and parochial schools have closed, placing a burden on our public schools and, therefore, a burden on Connecticut's taxpayers. My own constituents have seen St. Joseph's and St. Mary's close their doors. Our school system cannot survive if these schools continue to close. Connecticut's parochial, charter and private schools must complement our public schools in order for all of our children to achieve a quality education. Connecticut cannot survive in the long run without all of our schools being successful.

I respectfully ask the Committee to act favorably on House Bill 6627. Now, is the time for us to unite under one common goal, to support our children's education and their future. Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher Coutu". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Christopher Coutu
State Representative
47th District