



Mary C. Roberts
Director

Testimony of Mary C. Roberts
Director of CT Federation of Catholic School Parents

Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding
March 13, 2014

Senate Bill 29. *"An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and other Purposes."*

Good Morning, Senator Fonfara, Representative Widlitz and other distinguished members of the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding, my name is Mary Roberts and I am the Director of the CT Federation of Catholic School Parents. I appreciate this opportunity to offer my comments in support of amending section 9 of Bill 29, *An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements, Transportation and other Purposes*.

I have the honor of representing the 113 Catholic schools in the state of Connecticut, with 30,000 students in attendance and more than 2,000 dedicated teachers, administrators and employees working at our schools. We also have hundreds of volunteers helping us promote and enhance our educational and community service programs. In January, a certain town in CT had its public schools go into lockdown because a person with a gun was walking back and forth in front of one of the schools. The Catholic School in this town was not notified and it is across the street from where the person with a gun was spotted. Thankfully, the students were inside at an assembly, but had it been a nicer day, they would have been at recess and at risk for harm. As a parent of future Catholic school students, I want to ensure that my children are able to learn in a safe and nurturing environment, and I believe that supporting an amendment to Section 9 of Bill 29 does just that.

We applaud Governor Malloy and the General Assembly for their hard work in 2013 on the School Security Grant Program in Section 84 of Public Act 13-3.

Going forward, we are respectfully requesting on behalf of the Catholic schools, that the law be amended to allow our schools to also access grants for school safety and upgraded security measures (we have attached a proposal below).

Respectfully, we believe that improved safety of all school students –regardless of where they may go to school– should be a collective goal for the state of Connecticut. In our proposal below, we are requesting that if

a Catholic School spends a certain amount to improve its security, then up to 50% of that expenditure would be eligible for reimbursement from the State Fund. This will give our schools the assistance they need to ensure that every student, staff, faculty member and visit is in a safe space, where learning not fear is the main objective. Please amend Section 9 of SB 29 to allow Catholic and Private schools access to the school security grant funds available to the state's public school systems.

Thank you very much for your consideration of our proposed amendment, below.

Mary C. Roberts
Director
CT Federation of Catholic School Parents

PROPOSED JFS AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 29 →

Sec. 9. (e) For the Department of Education:

(1) Grants-in-aid for alterations, repairs, improvements, technology, equipment and capital start-up costs, including acquisition costs, to expand the availability of high-quality school models and assist in the implementation of common CORE state standards and assessments, in accordance with procedures established by the Commissioner of Education, not exceeding \$10,000,000;

(2) For the purpose of the school security infrastructure competitive grant program established pursuant to section 84 of public act 13-3, not exceeding \$10,000,000, **which will be available to private schools pursuant to section X of this act.**

Section X. (Effective from Passage). Section 84 of Public Act 13-3 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof:

(a) For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2013, to June 30, 2015, inclusive, the Departments of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Construction Services and Education shall jointly administer a school security infrastructure competitive grant program to reimburse **private schools and** towns for certain expenses for **private schools and for** schools under the jurisdiction of the town's school district incurred on or after the effective date of this section for: (1) The development or improvement of the security infrastructure of schools, based on the results of school building security assessments pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, including, but not limited to, the installation of surveillance cameras, penetration resistant vestibules, ballistic glass, solid core doors, double door access, computer-controlled electronic locks, entry door buzzer systems, scan card systems, panic alarms or other systems; and (2) (A) the training of school personnel in the operation and maintenance of the security infrastructure of school buildings, or (B) the purchase of portable entrance security devices, including, but not limited to, metal detector wands and screening machines and related training.

(b) On and after the effective date of this section, each **private school and each** local and regional board of education may, on behalf of its town or its member towns, apply, at such time and in such manner as the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection prescribes, to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection for a grant. Prior to the date that the School Safety Infrastructure Council makes its initial submission of the school safety infrastructure standards, pursuant to subsection (c) of section 80 of this act, the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, in consultation with the Commissioners of Construction Services and Education, shall determine which expenses are eligible for reimbursement under the program. On and after the date that the School Safety Infrastructure Council submits the school safety infrastructure standards, the decision to approve or deny an application and the determination of which expenses

are eligible for reimbursement under the program shall be in accordance with the most recent submission of the school safety infrastructure standards, pursuant to subsection (c) of section 80 of this act.

(c) **A private school may receive a grant of up to fifty percent of its eligible expenses.** A town may receive a grant equal to a percentage of its eligible expenses. The percentage **for a town** shall be determined as follows:

(1) Each town shall be ranked in descending order from one to one hundred sixty-nine according to town wealth, as defined in subdivision (26) of section 10-262f of the general statutes, (2) based upon such ranking, a percentage of not less than twenty or more than eighty shall be assigned to each town on a continuous scale, and (3) the town ranked first shall be assigned a percentage of twenty and the town ranked last shall be assigned a percentage of eighty. If there are not sufficient funds to provide grants to all towns **and private schools** based on the percentage determined pursuant to this subsection, the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, in consultation with the Commissioners of Construction Services and Education, shall give priority to applicants on behalf of **private and public** schools with the greatest need for security infrastructure, as determined by said commissioners based on school building security assessments of **the private schools and of** the schools under the jurisdiction of the town's school district conducted pursuant to this subsection. Of the applicants on behalf of such **private or public** schools with the greatest need for security infrastructure, said commissioners shall give first priority to applicants on behalf of **private or public** schools that have no security infrastructure at the time of such school building security assessment and succeeding priority to applicants on behalf of **public** schools located in priority school districts pursuant to section 10-266p of the general statutes. To be eligible for reimbursement pursuant to this section, an applicant board of education **or private school** shall (A) demonstrate that it has developed and periodically practices an emergency plan [at the schools under its jurisdiction] and that such plan has been developed in concert with applicable state or local first-responders, and (B) provide for a uniform assessment [of the schools under its jurisdiction], including any security infrastructure, using the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities' Safe Schools Facilities Check List. The assessment shall be conducted under the supervision of the local law enforcement agency.