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**Testimony in Support of
S.B. No. 318, 'An Act Concerning Private School Transportation'**

Before the Education Committee

March 2, 2016

As an administrator at St. Michael School in Pawcatuck, CT, I support S.B. No. 318.

I have been the principal at St. Michael School for 10 years, but my connection to the school goes back many years, as my own sons are both graduates of St. Michael School. I see firsthand, both in my students and in my family, the benefits a Catholic school education has.

Catholic schools provide students with a structured environment steeped in high standards and service to the community. There are many students who benefit from this environment. Catholic school students (and indeed our own students) test two or three years above grade level on standardized test. Catholic High Schools have high graduation and college acceptance rates. Our schools turn out students who are self-disciplined, self-motivated and responsible. It is important to both the Church and the local community to be able to provide this education to students. However, in light of rising tuitions and decreasing demographics in our state, it is becoming more and more difficult to continue to be accessible to students.

St. Michael School draws students from many of the surrounding towns in south eastern Connecticut. Stonington provides bus transportation to residents of the town, but students from other towns and cities must provide their own transportation. Often this makes it impossible for parents in these towns to enroll their students in our school. To offer inter-district transportation to these students would help us to increase the number of students enrolled and provide access to students who would benefit from our school, particularly lower income students for whom transportation is a serious concern.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to support S.B. No. 318.

Sincerely,

Doris S. Messina
Principal
St. Michael School