

Testimony of Edward J. Shine, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Norwich, Connecticut

Education Committee
March 2, 2016
Legislative Office Building, Room 2C

SB 318, An Act Concerning Private School Transportation

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischman and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Edward Shine and I am here representing the Most Reverend Michael R. Cote, D.D., Bishop of Norwich, the seventeen K-12 Catholic schools in the Norwich Diocese along with the 4000 students and their families in the four counties of Middlesex, New London, Windham and Tolland. I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 318, which is on the agenda today and which concerns nonpublic school transportation.

On behalf of all those named above, I urge the committee to recommend and the Connecticut General Assembly to enact legislation that would allow the allocation of current funds for nonpublic school student transportation to include voluntary inter-district transportation for nonpublic school students. Current legislation allows towns to provide transportation to non-public schools. Current law indicates local and regional boards of education may provide transportation. However, that voluntary effort in support of these resident families is not reimbursable under section 10-281. The SB 318 modification allows towns making the effort to provide transportation to receive reimbursement according to the formula and it encourages families in towns where transportation is not provided to work with their local boards of education and town officials in seeking transportation to schools outside their town of residence. In the archdiocese of Hartford and the Bridgeport and Norwich diocese there are more than

25,000 K-12 students. Transportation to private schools has been provided within our towns and cities for many years. The lack of reimbursement according to the formula for inter district transportation, however, has been an impediment to families as they pursue educational options for their children.

The second part of SB 318, part (b), would not have any impact on schools in the Norwich Diocese because of the 10 mile limit and the reference to towns with a population of 100,000 or more. There are only five towns that meet that criteria and they are in the Archdiocese of Hartford and the Diocese of Bridgeport. However, it is important that I share my overwhelming support for this section of SB 318 as it allows students and families in areas of population decline and financial distress the option to continue their education in a Catholic school by mandating transportation with reimbursement according to the formula.

The Connecticut Legislature and the courts have long agreed that public support of transportation provided families with private school options in the education of their children. The revisions provided in SB 318 recognize the significant financial and demographic shifts that have been taking place across the state and seek to provide relief.

That effort is commendable!

Thank you for your time and for your willingness to bring this bill forward for public comment and serious consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Edward J. Shine", is written over a horizontal line.

Edward J. Shine