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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 parents of students at St. Christopher School in East Hartford, CT, we support S.B. No. 318.

Although we live in Marlborough, our family has chosen a private school education at St. Christopher School because of its high educational standards and faith-based education program, which aligns with our family values. Additionally, sending our children to St. Christopher School allows them to interact with children from different towns and backgrounds, affording them an even broader educational experience.

Each year, fewer school choices are available, both public and private. Public schools and private schools alike are closing due to the change in demographics within the state of Connecticut. CT has one of the lowest birth rates in the nation, resulting in fewer school-age children.<sup>1</sup> This trend is projected to continue through 2025,<sup>2</sup> and fewer enrollments affect all schools, regardless of their nature. This has been brought close to home for our community with the situation in Glastonbury.<sup>3</sup> Private schools face the additional challenge of rising tuition costs in an uncertain economy at the state level which adds to already precarious household financial situations. Demographics and tuition costs alike have contributed to Catholic school closures in New Britain, Meriden and throughout the state.<sup>4,5</sup> Even so, many parents still choose Catholic schools, as our family has done. In the 2014-2015 academic year, Catholic elementary and

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<sup>1</sup> Bendici, R. (2013, September 5). Connecticut's Public School Enrollment Continues to Decline. Retrieved February 28, 2016, from <http://www.connecticutmag.com/Blog/Education/September-2013/Connecticuts-Public-School-Enrollment-Continues-to-Decline/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Marteka, P. (2014, May 12). Glastonbury Considers Closing Eastbury, Naubuc Schools. Retrieved February 28, 2016, from [http://articles.courant.com/2014-05-12/community/hc-glastonbury-school-closing-0513-20140512\\_1\\_gideon-welles-school-school-system-school-year](http://articles.courant.com/2014-05-12/community/hc-glastonbury-school-closing-0513-20140512_1_gideon-welles-school-school-system-school-year)

<sup>4</sup> WTNH.com. (2015, February 12). New Britain Catholic school closing. Retrieved February 28, 2016, from <http://wtnh.com/2015/02/12/new-britain-catholic-school-closing/>

<sup>5</sup> NBC Connecticut. (2015, January 14). Catholic School Closing in Meriden. Retrieved February 28, 2016, from <http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/Catholic-School-Closing-in-Meriden-288633061.html>

middle schools in CT educated 18,446 students who would otherwise funnel into the CT public school system, increasing the financial and educational burdens on public schools.<sup>6</sup>

As more schools close and thus fewer school choices are available, families who choose a private education for their children will very likely need to choose a school that is outside their home town. Offering inter-district bus service could greatly assist these families - who are also paying into the public school system via their state and local taxes - with transportation costs, and could perhaps be a tipping point that allows more families to choose a private school, further reducing strain on the public school system.

Please support these and other benefits to CT residents by keeping access to our private schools alive and viable for all children by allowing state reimbursements for inter-district transportation for K-8 nonpublic schools.

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

Sincerely,

Elizabeth and Jeffrey Mitchell

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<sup>6</sup> McDonald, D., PBVM, Ph.D., & Schultz, M. M. (2015). United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2014-2015: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment, and Staffing. 29.