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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 at *Our Lady of Mercy School, Madison, CT* I support S.B. No. 318.

Our Lady of Mercy School provides a safe and morally-enhanced high quality education. As one of only few blue-ribbon catholic schools in the entire country, we are very proud of the teachers and staff's commitment to our children and the balance of both academic and moral development.

We recognize that sending our children to catholic schools is a choice. However, we are also taxpayers and pay more than our fair-share of taxes to support the public school system and public school transportation. Transportation of children to catholic schools should continue to be supported to ensure their safety while traversing to and from school.

It is our belief that the choice of where to educate your child is personal and dependent on the individual needs of a child. It should not be influenced by one's ability to transport their children, particularly within the same district to which they pay taxes for the public schools. Failure to fund the reimbursement where transportation is provided will limit the choices that people have available and may result in an increased burden in some of CTs most strained school districts. Until a system is in place that recognizes the investment catholic school parents are making and the relief that this choice provides to the home school districts, it is irresponsible to fail to reimburse the towns that provide this service.

Please keep access to our schools alive and viable for all children by allowing state reimbursements for inter-district transportation for K-8 nonpublic schools.

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

Sincerely,

Tara & John Picard