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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 a parent of three current and one incoming student of Our Lady of Mercy School, I support **S.B. No. 318.**

Our Lady of Mercy School has provided my children the unique opportunity to learn and grow in an environment that promotes academic success, empowers individual learners, honors differentiation of curriculum, and expects student accountability all while fostering a sense of family, community service and a faith-based moral compass that is not promoted in our public schools. The average yearly per pupil expenditure in our local public school system is over \$16,000 per student, per year. With three of my children currently enrolled at Our Lady of Mercy, that is a savings of \$48,000 per year to my local district. School vouchers are not an option in Connecticut and my family is responsible for contributing our full tax rate regardless of the fact that our children are not enrolled in our local schools.

In consideration of recent education reform, curricular and standardized testing mandates, and the efforts to remove all non-secular subject matter from public schools, Catholic Schools provide an affordable option to families looking to place their children in learning environments which set high academic standards, allow teachers freedom of curriculum, and allow the school community to celebrate its faith. As all schools face the reality of changing demographics, decreasing student population, and school closures, we must make extra efforts to support our Catholic Schools and to continue to allow this to be a realistic school choice for families. One way to make Catholic Schools more accessible to families is to allow for bus transportation both in and out of district.

Parents meeting demands of work schedules and school schedules for children of various ages must rely on safe and dependable modes of transportation for their children. The money saved by local districts when students are educated in private schools in combination with town reimbursements can offset associated transportation costs. 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.

I urge the committee to support **S.B. No. 318.**

Sincerely,

Laura Bauer