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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 Saint Mary School in Newington, CT, I support S.B. No. 318.

Saint Mary School is a valuable educational option for the Central Connecticut area, and for me personally, it is a very important institution. Not only have I been associated professionally with the school since 1994, it is also the school where my own three children started their education in Pre-K and graduated in Grade 8. I can attest first hand to the outstanding spiritual and academic foundation the students who attend Saint Mary School receive.

It is of utmost importance that children from cities and towns surrounding Newington have the opportunity to receive the quality education we offer. We must do all that we can to make Catholic schools accessible to all children. The passage of this act would go a long way in regards to that.

Over the past six years that I have been principal of Saint Mary School, I have heard many, many parents (who live outside of Newington) remark that if transportation was available, they would enroll their children in this school. How sad it is that lack of transportation is a key reason we lose the opportunity to provide for the educational needs of so many children! Allowing a reimbursement to towns that voluntarily provide inter-district transportation to elementary school students that live out of town will absolutely bring more children to Saint Mary School, thus helping to insure that we remain a viable educational option in central Connecticut. This reimbursement would not only benefit Saint Mary School. It is crucial to keep our urban schools open and accessible to students whose schools have closed in neighboring towns.

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.

Respectfully,

Margaret M. McDonald