Testimony in Opposition to:

GOVERNOR’S BILLS 7148 & 7150 – THE GOVERNOR’S EDUCATION BUDGET and EDUCATION BUDGET IMPLEMENTER – SECTION 1

My name is Robert Shea. I am a lobbyist for the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference.

My wife Rosanne and daughter Fiona both attended local Catholic Schools (many years apart) -- Saint Timothy’s Grade School and Northwest Catholic High School, both in West Hartford.

Rosanne and Fiona both loved their Catholic School experiences, in large part because they made friends with people from different backgrounds and from different towns.

Our Connecticut Catholic Schools work very hard to ensure that our schools are diverse in many different ways. Some kids are wealthy, and some kids are not wealthy; some kids live in suburban/rural areas, and some kids live in the cities; some kids are Catholic; some kids have different religious beliefs or no beliefs in particular. It’s all great!

On a statewide basis, our Catholic schools provide a lot of money in scholarships to help kids attend our schools. If kids want to attend our schools, we really try to financially help their families make it work.

For several decades, our Governors and the Legislature have recognized that our Catholic Schools offer nice opportunities for certain kids who want a diverse educational experience; and they have always embraced and supported our nonpublic school children -- including kids at Catholic schools, Jewish schools and other private schools -- through two great programs: (1) the school bus program, and (2) the school nurse program.

Now, the Governor’s Education Budget (at Budget Document, page B-62) terminates the state’s commitment to the nonpublic school nurse program, stating a savings of about $3.4M.

We are respectfully hoping that Governor Lamont will reconsider this proposal; and we are hoping that the Legislature will not support this proposal.

Our Catholic schools are trying to be helpful members of our great educational community. Please continue to help us by maintaining the nonpublic school nurse program in the Education Budget.

Thank you.

Robert Shea
West Hartford, CT