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**Testimony of
Anne LaMonica
Associate Director for Education
Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference**

**Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee
Public Hearing**

March 17, 2017

Legislative Office Building, Room 2E

**Testimony in Support of Raised Senate Bill 1012
*AN ACT CONCERNING THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE TAX CREDIT***

Senator Fonfara, Senator Frantz, Representative Rojas, and Members of this Committee:

As Associate Director for Education for the Connecticut Public Affairs Conference, the public policy office of the Bishops of Connecticut, and on behalf of our Catholic school families, including over 25,000 students and 2,000 employees, I would like to thank your committee for raising and considering Senate Bill 1012.

A very similar bill passed this Committee and passed the Senate last session, but was unable to be called in the House.

Our 100 Catholic schools are part of the fabric of our state and strongly enhance our quality of life. They have been the cornerstone of neighborhoods for decades. Many families choose a nonpublic school based upon their own beliefs, family traditions, and size of the school. We attract a wide-range of students – 21% of our students are not Catholic, and 31% of our students are minorities.

Our schools should not be considered to be in competition with our great public schools. Instead, they should be considered a different option for families, and their vibrancy should be considered a great benefit for Connecticut.

Presently, many interested families cannot afford Catholic school tuition.

As an example, 30 years ago at St. James School in Manchester, many children walked a few blocks to school. Tuition was only \$300. Now with laypersons as teachers and with the changing economies of our town, the vast number of students now living in those homes cannot afford half of the school's tuition, which is about \$2,000. More of these children and children like them ought to be able to enjoy this excellent, award winning school in their backyard, their neighborhood.

To address these financial challenges, last year, our dioceses, schools, and foundations provided \$12 million in scholarships to our families, but we would like to do more. Our schools have room to accommodate more children, but they have no plans to expand.

Senate Bill 1012 will help us do more at the local level, and it will also help other nonpublic schools do more, by allowing local businesses to obtain tax credits for contributions to scholarship programs established under the requirements of the Neighborhood Assistance Act for lower income students.

I respectfully request a change in language from "private" to "nonpublic" for consistency with other statutes.

Finally, there is a bill on today's agenda regarding the repeal of the business tax. If that should pass, and even if should not, I urge you to consider adding language to allow the credits of the Neighborhood Assistance Act to be applied against the taxes of individuals and pass thru business entities. Many of our best supporters run such local businesses.

As always, we support bills that make education more affordable for all, such as tax credits for employer contributions towards Coverdell savings accounts and student loan payments.

Everyone wins when Connecticut has diverse educational opportunities for all families.

I encourage you to review our attached fact sheet about our schools, and I respectfully request your support for S.B. 1012.

Please contact me or Bob Shea should you have any questions.



Anne LaMonica
Associate Director for Education

OPEN TO ALL FAITHS

22% Students are non-Catholic

ACROSS THE STATE

- 19 High Schools
- 82 Elementary Schools
- 3 Special Needs Schools
- 25,000+ Students
- 2,000+ Employees

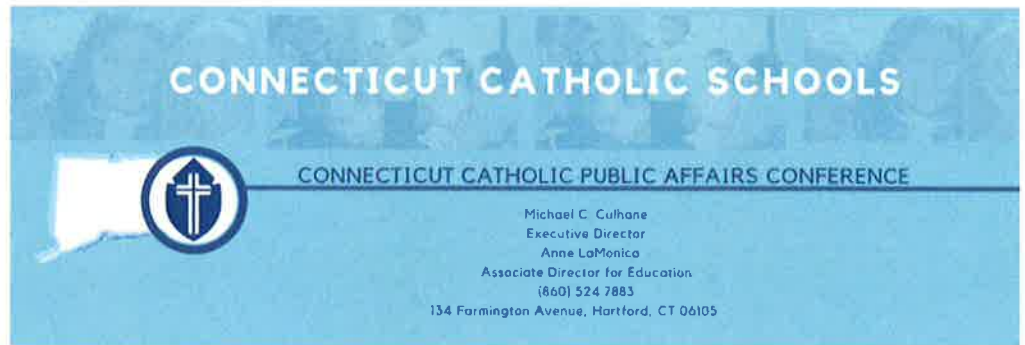
SAVE TAXPAYERS HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

ACCOUNTABLE

- Accredited by New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
- Teachers complete over 40 hours of professional development/year
- TerraNova® & Iowa Assessments®
- Blue Ribbon Schools of National Recognition
- 100 % High School Graduation Rate
- 99% of graduating high school seniors go on to college
- Nationally recognized curriculum mapping

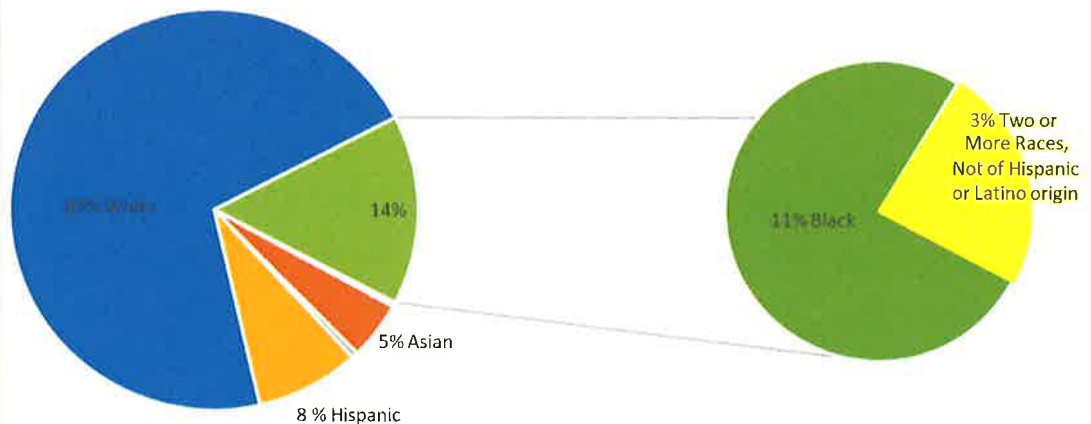
CONNECTED

Catholic Schools do business with local vendors, such as: food vendors, landscapers, booksellers, and tradespersons.



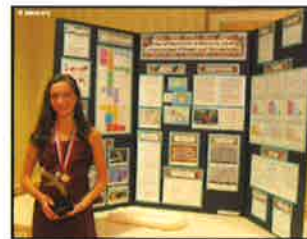
DIVERSE

2014 CT Catholic Schools Average Diversity %
Source: NCES Dataset



CHALLENGING

Catholic Schools emphasize individual growth. Theresa Oei is a Presidential Scholar, Connecticut cheerleader for the New England International Irish step dancer, and a Catholic High School with a B.S. in and biochemistry, Yale University. She currently works at the Broad Massachusetts Institute of Technology genome-editing techniques.



growth. Theresa Oei is Science Fair winner, Patriots, an 2011 graduate of East molecular biophysics

Institute of the and Harvard studying

CHARITABLE

The Archdiocese of Hartford and the Dioceses of Bridgeport & Norwich provided over \$12,000,000 in tuition aid to students in 2015.

Catholic High School Students complete at least 100 Community Service Learning Hours, generating thousands of hours of service.

As an example of one of many, East Catholic High School student Grace Mazzarella received the 2014 Better Business Bureau's Student Ethics Award and Scholarship and was recognized by Aurora Women and Girls Foundation in West Hartford for her commitment to community service. Grace started a project for Feeding Children Everywhere project at ECHS. Now an annual event, enough items were collected for over 45,000 meals in for Haiti and Uganda.

