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TESTIMONY OF ANNE LAMONICA  
IN SUPPORT OF  
SENATE BILL NO. 949  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
MARCH 3, 2021

For years, the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference has tried to impress upon the state legislature both the justice and the benefit of providing significant relief and fairness in education funding.

Pope Francis insists that parents be able to exercise their “right to choose freely the kind of education—accessible and of good quality—which they wish to give their children in accordance with their convictions.” Indeed, families must be able to assert their independence and self-determination. The dignity owed to every child in every family demands an education funding system that enables their efforts to better themselves and those around them.

This dignity due to each child must be prioritized in a state with several school districts that have high chronic absenteeism rates, low graduation rates, and low test scores. Yet we must be clear: we do not blame the teachers for these failures. Rather, this is the culmination of decades of policy decisions, even small, simple ones. For example, in recent years, by refusing to assist with student transportation, the city of Hartford rejected our efforts to educate its resident children in our area Catholic schools that have 100% graduation rates regardless of student background. In one year alone, one particular Catholic school saved the state and the city of Hartford over a million dollars based on costs per pupil.

It is our understanding that waitlists to schools of choice could be relieved by allowing full education funding to follow each and every child. We also contend that Connecticut has not accounted for all children in the state to be educated, which has contributed to unnecessary rancor between public and nonpublic education. Every child should be included in funding formulas. We encourage an amendment that would offer true parity and include children who happen to attend nonpublic schools, about 5% of the school-age population in Connecticut, in order to maximize educational and religious freedom. Even if half of student’s allocated funding followed her to a nonpublic school, it would assist parents in choosing a school that meets the needs of their child.

For these reasons, we support Senate Bill No. 949.