



House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee

February 9, 2010

Oral Testimony by Pete Noll, Education Director

Subject: Policy Recommendations for Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC) and Minnesota Chapter of the Council of American Private Education (MNCAPE).

Minnesota has an enviable, national reputation as a state that has promoted parental choice in education. However, there have been efforts over the past two or 3 legislative sessions to erode away at programs that are beneficial to children attending nonpublic schools. In particular, under a mandate reduction initiative last session, pupil transportation and equitable special education services for qualifying children in nonpublic schools came under assault. Our concern is that assaults on the aforementioned programs as well as on textbook aid, testing materials, health services and counseling services for children matriculated in nonpublic schools, will continue to occur.

The downturn in the economy has caused many nonpublic families to transfer their children from nonpublic to public or charter schools because they must pay the cost of nonpublic education from their personal, discretionary financial resources. Members, just a reminder that every child that transfers from a nonpublic school to a public school adds to the tax burden and, consequently, causes an increase to an already burgeoning state budget deficit.

The fact is these programs cost state taxpayers very little, relative to the overall K-12 budget, yet yield very high dividends in terms of a well educated citizenry. For this reason alone private, nonpublic and parochial schools should be perceived as valuable assets to this state. The Minnesota Catholic Conference values all forms of quality education—public, charter, private, parochial, nonpublic and home schools—in this state because the accord parents an array of choices from which to select the option that best suits the unique needs of each child.

Therefore, we implore you to preserve these programs that provide the very basic provisions and services to children attending nonpublic schools. Thank you for your time this morning and I stand for questions.