

**House K-12 Education Finance Division**

**Thursday, February 25, 2010**

**2:45 P.M.**

**10 State Office Bldg.**

*Good afternoon Chair Greiling and Members,*

*My name is Pete Noll, Education Director for the Minnesota Catholic Conference.*

*The purpose of my testimony today is to ask you to oppose House File 2910, a bill that would seek to deprive nonpublic and charter school students of certain transportation benefits to their school-of-choice.*

*Any diminishment or elimination of equal transportation to children attending nonpublic or charter schools, including the assessment of rider fees, would clearly set up more constraints and barriers to certain parents who choose to exercise their right to send their children to any school which fulfills their obligations under Minnesota's compulsory instruction law [MN Statute 120A.22.].*

*Any diminishment or elimination of pupil transportation compromises the safety of Minnesota children. This law is one of the oldest parental choice laws in Minnesota and was originally establish as the best, most efficient method of transporting children between their home and school.*

*These nonpublic school families pay taxes like traditional public and charter school families, yet pay for the preponderance of the cost to education their children from their own income, thus saving the state of Minnesota hundreds of millions of dollar which can be parlayed into supporting public education. Now to seek to bill them again for this basic service that was designed to safely transport children to and from school is double jeopardy for the families that would be negatively impacted by this bill.*

*Finally, the diminishment or elimination of pupil transportation of nonpublic school students could be the tipping point for many parents, causing them to have to pull their children from the nonpublic school to enroll them in a public school. While this inevitability would be celebrated by those who stand to profit, the cost to the state of Minnesota for each child that moves from nonpublic to public school would seem to be approximately \$10,000, thus adding to the burgeoning state deficit. For sake of example, if only 2% of nonpublic school students (i.e., 2,000 of the approximately 100,000 nonpublic school students) have to matriculate in a public school, the additional annual cost to the state would be \$20,000,000. Since the total allocation for nonpublic transportation is about \$13 million annually, even from an economic perspective, this does not make sense.*

*Rather than thanking nonpublic school families for saving the state of Minnesota hundreds of millions of dollars each year, this bill would seek to punish them for their decision to send their children to their school-of-choice.*

*Therefore, I implore you to vote this bill down today. Thank you!*