

Catholic Conference of Ohio

9 E. Long St., Suite 201, Columbus, Ohio 43215

July 29, 2009

Dear Elected Official,

On behalf of the Catholic Bishops of Ohio, I write to register several concerns regarding the state budget (HB1). We recognize the unprecedented economic situation facing Ohio, but we are troubled by the selectivity and harshness of certain cuts and the lack of public input into the conference committee's recommendations.

Some positive changes occurred before the budget finally was approved; however, deep cuts still were made to programs in mental health, elder care and protective services. Catholic hospitals will experience a serious shortfall. We are very disappointed in the cut of \$59 million over the next two years to line items 200-511 and 200-532 that provide assistance to students attending Catholic and other chartered nonpublic schools. Furthermore, reduction in the scholarship amounts for EdChoice and elimination of systematic increases in these amounts will be detrimental to parents and students who desire to benefit from an education in our Catholic schools.

For over 25 years, state budgets treated students attending public and chartered nonpublic schools equitably. As state funding for public schools increased or decreased, line items benefiting students in chartered nonpublic schools increased or decreased proportionately. In HB1, this did not happen. The final budget reduced line items supporting students in chartered nonpublic schools by 15 percent from the House and Senate-passed versions of the budget bill. When the new cuts are added to cuts made during 2008/2009, funding for these programs benefiting students in chartered nonpublic schools will be 17.5 percent less than it was on July 1, 2008, while state support for students in public schools will be reduced by less than one percent and then bolstered with federal stimulus money. The new budget suggests that Catholic taxpayers and the children we serve will be the last to receive any consideration and the first to be cut.

The \$59 M cut in the *Auxiliary Services* and *Administrative Cost Reimbursement* programs undermines the education of thousands of Ohio's young people and threatens to destabilize a system of schools that provides a high-quality education for hundreds of thousands of citizens of this state. As a result of these cuts, an average parish elementary school of 350 students will receive approximately \$15,750 less in direct reimbursement and \$34,300 less in resources and services, and a Catholic high school of 800 students will receive approximately \$36,000 less in direct reimbursement and \$78,000 less in resources and services.

Budget Cut Concerns

July 29, 2009

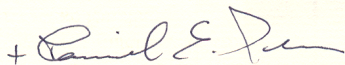
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We are extremely proud of the educational outcomes that our schools achieve. Catholic schools make a tremendous contribution to our State. In addition, Catholic and other chartered nonpublic schools save the taxpayers of Ohio \$2 billion a year in educational cost that the state would pay if these students were attending public schools. Our schools have a long history of public accountability for the public dollars and services they receive.

We are deeply disappointed in the legislative process that occurred during the conference committee on HB 1. Many legislators have told us that they disagree with the cuts made in benefits for students in Catholic schools, and with the lack of opportunity to voice their concerns or influence the conference committee process.

We strongly encourage you to find a nonpartisan way to remedy the cuts. We sincerely hope that you will address our concerns in the budget corrections bill. Please tell us how we can help you in this effort. Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel E. Pilarczyk", is written on a light yellow rectangular background.

Most Reverend Daniel E. Pilarczyk
Archbishop of Cincinnati