

Michigan Catholic Conference



23 January 2009

Dear Senator/Congressperson:

The recently released House version of the economic recovery package includes a \$14 billion provision for modernizing public schools (including charter schools) with technology upgrades and energy efficiency improvements. Unfortunately, religious and independent PreK-12 schools are excluded from this provision, even though a companion provision (another \$6 billion) relating to higher education includes religious and independent colleges and universities.

Federal programs that benefit public school students and teachers should provide equitable benefits to comparably situated private school students and teachers. Congress has long recognized this principle since the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, which helps children in need regardless of the type of school they attend. Such equity is based not only on a commitment to fairness and inclusion, but also on the practical recognition that America's children are educated in a variety of schools.

There is a particular national interest in preserving private elementary and secondary schools in that their closing (as has been the case, unfortunately, with many urban religious schools) presents an added financial burden on already hard-pressed public schools. Private K-12 schools currently save taxpayers an estimated \$48 billion annually, enroll over five million students, and employ 425,000 full-time equivalent teachers.

On behalf of the Michigan Catholic Conference, I urge you to include religious and independent PK-12 schools in the school components of the economic recovery package.

Sincerely,

Paul Stankewitz
Associate for Public Policy