

Sept 18, 2008 House Labor Relations Committee Hearing

Testimony Mike Young 2:40p

I offer my testimony in support of the Catholic Church and as a representative parent of three children who are attending Catholic School in the Diocese of Scranton.

As we are all familiar the parochial based system of schools that once worked for the Scranton Diocese was recognized and agreed, even by members of the SDACT community, to be a broken system. Catholic School parishes, one this year, one or two more the following year, could no longer financially support themselves or the operation of their school. Individual parishes that attempted to sustain a parish school, more than likely took on debt in the form of loans from the Diocese of Scranton. As more schools had closed, more debt seemed to be left in the hands of clergy officials. The Diocese ended up eating the costs, whose original burden it was on the parish based schools to repay. My family is grateful to Bishop Martino for trying his best to keep more schools open as long as school administrators could afford to do so, and then even sometime longer.

As a parent of one closed school, my wife and my family participated in school fundraisers with other parents and the teachers at the summer bazaars, in bake sales, and by donating flea market items, and by selling raffle tickets. And we supported other schools doing the same in the Wilkes-Barre area.

In the reorganization of the parish based schools, my family remained in the Catholic education system, a newly developed Diocesan based solution, not a perfect fit for some, still a major adjustment for others, and sadly others still had found it easier to opt out all together. But still the system was improved over the fiscally ill-managed dangers that plague our economic conditions in America today. Again I congratulate the Most Rev Bishop for his foresight into these matters who deftly avoided the setbacks most corporations and accounting firms and banking industries have scandalously fallen prey to in recent days.

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HB2626 is an attempt by Commonwealth to impose a vote on the Diocese of Scranton one which may very well force the closure of more Catholic Schools. It was written in language too neutral and too broad a scope so as to be all inclusive of "religiously affiliated" groups. But make no mistake of its intended target; it is clearly written to give states rights jurisdiction over the Catholic Church's teaching in its own private non-publicly funded schools. HB2626 is not the same continuation of SDACT union that existed in the Diocese for decades. HB2626 will be a state-jurisdiction, state legitimized union, HB2626 will empower any person who runs that union to act outside the teachings of the Catholic Church, legally although not morally. It will certainly mean the end to what was once an effort in an experimentation to educate responsibly and through dedication and through example of service to others. When I was student, many years ago, I didn't pay much mind to reading or math, my grades weren't terrific in the good sense, nor did I really want to study. I gave my teachers a hard time, but they pushed me back and brought me inline eventually. Everyone knew that a lay teacher could always do better teaching in the public school system. And yet they would stay in a dedicated manner, of their own free will, choosing to teach in a private parochial school.

There is an alternative to HB2626. That alternative may be to reignite a union party that is not backed by the state, if this so be the finding of the Vatican. But right now all teachers and other employees do have a voice in the employee relations program. Bureaucratic in some sense, but still it ensures that parents can still afford and schools can continue to operate in a more accountable way. In this Catholic community and to ensure the integrity and preservation of Catholic education, we will go forward being accountable to each other. Step up to the plate and participate and Jesus will show you a life worth living for.