

April 8, 2010

Dear Editor,

Over these next few months the General Assembly will finish crafting the state's proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1st. One of my main concerns with the budget deals with the proposed cuts to funding for Delaware's private and parochial schools.

The Governor has proposed – as a way to bridge the budget shortfall – eliminating state funding for school nurses at private schools and forcing the program to compete for state monies through the Legislature's Grant-in-Aid process, where there are no guarantees the program will continue. The proposed budget also eliminates the bus transportation subsidy that the state provides for private school parents.

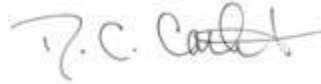
These proposals serve as nothing more than a hardship for the families of private school students and I will do everything I can to make sure the funding for these programs remains intact.

School nurses at both public and private schools in Delaware are essential in helping to keep students healthy. According to the National Association of School Nurses, school nurses help students manage chronic illnesses and stay healthy. This, in turn, helps to increase student attendance rates and prevent parents from having to take off from work to care for their sick child. The Association also states that school nurses play a significant role in preventing the spread of infectious diseases, including the H1N1 flu virus.

In addition to the proposed elimination of funding for private school nurses, the Governor is also recommending doing away with bus transportation funding for private school students. If approved, a cost shift at the local school district level will likely occur, causing the local districts to pass on the costs to their taxpayers in order to subsidize transportation for students attending private schools. It is unrealistic to think that taxpayers will not be impacted negatively by a decision to eliminate bus transportation for private school parents. The costs will likely be shifted to the local school districts which will then be passed on to all taxpayers.

Let us not forget that private school parents are taxpaying citizens of Delaware and pay their fair share into our public school system, even though they choose to send their children to a private or parochial school. It is unfair to treat private school parents as second-class citizens. Unless my colleagues and I work against these proposed funding cuts we will continue to provide a disservice to them and their children. I stay committed to making sure our private school parents are treated fairly through this budget cycle.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.C. Cathcart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "R" and a stylized "C" for "Cathcart".

State Representative Richard C. Cathcart
Minority Leader
9th District