

Keep this for reference.

NATIONAL LEVEL

PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION: WE URGE SUPPORT for statutory language that allows ALL parents, but especially low and middle income parents, to choose the education they believe is best suited for their children, whether that is a public, private or religious school. This includes an adequately funded federal scholarship/voucher demonstration project of educational choice for all parents. This would also provide for tax relief for families with children; possible options include: a refundable child or educational tax credit for all parents with children in elementary and secondary school. This would extend the concept of higher education savings accounts/IRA's to parents with children enrolled in public, private and religious elementary and secondary schools. Finally, we could not support legislation that did not provide civil rights protections in elementary and secondary school programs.

RE-AUTHORIZATION OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965 (SEA): WE URGE SUPPORT for statutory language that protects the full participation of eligible students and staff in private and religious schools in all covered programs; allows participation in programs where these students and staff are currently not allowed to participate; provides for the equitable distribution of funds for Title I services to public, private and religious school students; retains the "child benefit" theory as a basic operating principle for participation; strengthens requirements for consultation on all aspects of program development and delivery before any decisions are made; provides flexibility in the delivery of services, especially where the needs of private and religious school students and staff differ from those of their public school counterparts; retains the "Capital Expense" provisions until the impact of the *Agostini* decision can be accurately determined; provides for adequate representation of private and religious school representatives on all advisory panels; retains Title VI and increases the availability of benefits of the new teacher recruitment and retention program for teachers in private and religious schools.

BUDGET/APPROPRIATION ISSUES: WE URGE SUPPORT for appropriations that continue or increase funding for all federal programs benefiting private and religious school students and teachers authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) - this is especially important for Title I and Title VI. We support continued appropriations for "Capital Expenses." WE URGE OPPOSITION to any "budget rescissions" legislation that would reduce current federal funding that benefit students and teachers in private and religious schools.

EDUCATION BLOCK GRANTS/LOCAL FLEXIBILITY: WE URGE SUPPORT for statutory language in any block grant education flexibility proposals to ensure that private and religious school students and personnel are guaranteed equitable benefits in all such programs; targets funds on students and personnel not institutions; does not allow federal funds to be commingled with state and local funds; contains an expressed federal pre-exemption provision to avoid state constitutions and laws restricting the participation of students and personnel from private and religious schools; allows federal funds to *supplement* not *supplant* state and local funds; allocates federal funds equitably to students and teachers in public, private and religious schools and contains a strong by-pass provision allowing the Secretary to provide services to private and religious students and personnel through a third-party provider where a state or local agency is unable or unwilling to provide services under such programs or where the services are deemed to be of poor quality.

RE-AUTHORIZATION OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA): WE URGE SUPPORT for statutory language that federally funds this program at the 40% level originally promised by Congress. Changes the language to require the provision of services to eligible individual private and religious school students, and that such services, where possible, be provided on site, consistent with the *Agostini* decision. Retains the strengthened child find language. Strengthens existing complaint and by-pass language so that it is similar to Title I. Provides all parents with due process rights. Includes language that would prevent the amount of state and local dollars available for services to private and religious school students from counting against their fair share of federal dollars available under IDEA.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION/RENOVATION PROGRAMS: WE URGE SUPPORT for statutory language that would include private and religious schools in any proposal - grants, interest free loans or tax free bonds - that would provide all school children with a quality education and in a situation that is healthy and safe. This would include, but not be limited to, renovations for things such as environmental hazards, energy efficiency, technology upgrades, accessibility modifications, etc.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS E-RATE/INTERNET ACCESS: WE URGE SUPPORT for retaining statutory language insuring the continued inclusion of private and religious schools in the Universal Service provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. WE URGE OPPOSITION to any proposal to change the structure or to change how the E-Rate is currently funded.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT/RETENTION: WE URGE SUPPORT for statutory language that would include private and religious school educators in any proposal promoting teacher recruitment and retention. This would include, but not be limited to, funding for background checks, certification requirements, loan forgiveness and ongoing professional development.

STATE LEVEL

INCREASED REIMBURSEMENT FOR ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

SUMMARY: The New York State Board of Regents has set new curriculum standards and graduation requirements for all students and is instituting new tests to assess student performance against those standards. The Regents have also mandated that schools provide academic intervention services (remedial instruction) to students who fail to meet minimum performance levels on these tests.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVE: The Conference seeks the resources necessary to ensure those students in religious, private and independent schools receive the academic intervention services they need. It is estimated that \$10 million will be needed to meet these needs in the 2001-2002 school year.

Governor Pataki's budget proposal for the 2001-2001 year includes \$5 million for Academic Intervention Services for religious, private and independent schools. While this is a positive development, it falls short of the need. We therefore urge Senate and Assembly leaders to increase this appropriation to \$10 million to meet the full range of services required for religious, private and independent school students. (The Senate has already promised 2.5 million. We want the assembly to do the same.)

RATIONALE: Under the higher academic standards set forth by the Regents, no student will be allowed to graduate and receive a Regents diploma unless they have passed five new Regents exams. In addition, there are new elementary and middle school exams designed to assess student performance before high school. The Regents also require that schools provide academic intervention services to students who score below state-designed performance levels on these new tests. The same requirements apply to religious, independent or private schools which choose to award Regents Diplomas to their students. All such students, therefore, must pass the five Regents Exams and must be provided academic intervention services if they fail to meet the state's performance levels on the elementary, middle schools or Regents exams.

Our students are performing fairly well on the new state tests. Just as in public schools though, we have a number of students who will need to receive academic intervention services in order to meet graduation requirements. The cost of providing these services can be prohibitive considering that the services must be provided above and beyond the students' regular instruction and often require hiring additional teachers. Our ability to ensure that each and every student meets the standards and earns a Regents Diploma hinges largely on whether resources will be available to cover the costs of this mandate.

Mandated Services Aid is the mechanism designed to provide funds to schools to cover the cost of implementing mandates and participating in state programs. The Conference urges the Board of Regents, state legislators and the Governor to increase the mandated services aid appropriation to enable our students to receive the services necessary to earn a Regents diploma.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING WORKERS

SUMMARY OF ISSUE: The Catholic Church is the largest non-profit provider of education, health care, and charitable services in New York State. Currently, each of these service areas is suffering a severe shortage of qualified workers to provide needed services to children, families and vulnerable adults.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVE: The Conference seeks a variety of remedies to address the shortage of school teachers, nurses, home health aides, and other critical health and human services workers as outlined below.

EDUCATION

Continued increases in student enrollment and a profusion of teacher retirements has created a growing shortage in the supply of qualified teachers for public, private, religious and independent schools. The fact that public schools often recruit religious school teachers to fill their own teaching positions, coupled with the inability of religious schools to pay competitive salaries, has exasperated the problem for religious schools. Governor Pataki seeks to expand New York State's "Teachers of Tomorrow" program to appropriate \$50 million to recruit, train and retain teachers for public schools only. The Conference seeks to be included in this as well as other recruitment initiatives that will benefit all children in all schools.