



**New Jersey Catholic Conference**  
**149 North Warren Street**  
**Trenton, New Jersey 08608**  
**Phone - 609-989-1120 FAX – 609-989-1152**

Statement on Fiscal Year 2017 State Budget  
Assembly Budget Hearing  
March 21, 2016

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Assembly Budget Committee. My name is Dr. George Corwell, Director of the Office of Education for the New Jersey Catholic Conference, and I have with me Mary McElroy, Esq., Director of the New Jersey Network of Catholic School Families for the Archdiocese of Newark.

We are speaking this morning on certain aspects of the nonpublic school accounts in Governor Christie's FY '17 Budget. Specifically, while public school accounts were increased, or at least, level-funded, the nonpublic school accounts lost \$6.25M from the total in the Appropriations Act for FY '16 (\$92,753,000 for FY '16 compared with the proposal of \$86,503,000 for FY '17). This is a major decrease of over 6.8% in the modest funds which are provided to our parents and students in the nonpublic schools of New Jersey.

The most dramatic of these cuts was the entire loss of the Nonpublic School Security Aid Program from last year. The program was funded at \$25.00 per student, which was a beginning of the necessary improvements to protect nonpublic schools students. This program was funded through Budget language in the FY '16 Appropriations Act.

By eliminating the program entirely, the Governor's Budget exposed these schools to risks from a variety of sources. Recent experiences in the United States and other parts of the world have indicated that sectarian nonpublic schools are prime targets for active shooter incidents. Furthermore, the loss of this funding suggests the lives of nonpublic school students are worth less than public schools students. An indication of this disparity is reflected in the \$4M increase in the account labeled "Security Aid" available to public schools districts in the amount of over \$199M in the Governor's FY '17 Budget.

A troublesome concern for nonpublic school parents is the number of nonpublic school transportation routes that were cancelled last year because of the eight-year freeze in the per-pupil amount for nonpublic school transportation. Even though there is a statutory requirement for a CPI increase or decrease in the \$884.00 per pupil for nonpublic school transportation, this mandate has been ignored in the last eight budget cycles. Parents had routes cancelled at the last minute and were forced to transfer their children to a public school at greater taxpayer expense. We ask for some consideration with regard to increasing that amount by the CPI figure for the intervening years during which it had been frozen.

Additional concerns are reflected in the per-pupil amounts for Nonpublic School Nursing Services which dropped from \$94.00 per pupil in FY '15 to \$85.00 in FY '16 and is retained at that funding level in the Governor's Budget. Because of the role of nurses as first responders in the case of emergencies, it is critical to have a nurse on duty during the hours when school is in

**Representing the Archdiocese of Newark, Diocese of Camden, Diocese of Metuchen,  
Diocese of Paterson, Diocese of Trenton, Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and  
Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese**

session. This loss of funding has forced many nonpublic schools to lose the presence of the nurse at these critical hours. Many legislative initiatives have resulted in additional duties for nurses, both public and nonpublic alike. Such initiatives as the Scholastic Student-Athlete Safety Act (P.L. 2013, c. 71), the Cardiac Arrest legislation (P.L. 2013, c. 209), and additional mandates calling for the presence of nurses to both treat students and train faculty with regard the use of epinephrine.

Additionally, the Nonpublic School Technology Initiative, originally funded at \$40.00 per student, has been reduced to \$20.00 per pupil in the Governor's FY '17 Budget. One can only wonder, with the increase in the need to have students in all schools savvy in technologically, how anyone can justify reducing this amount further in the present year's Budget.

We are most grateful that the Legislature has continued the pattern of restoring losses in the Governor's Budget in the final version of the Appropriations Act the previous two years. We expect our children, whether in public or nonpublic schools, to be prepared to contribute and thrive in a global society, in order to be effective to be citizens of our State and our nation. Creating serious losses in these necessary programs of Security Aid, transportation, nursing, and technology send the message that nonpublic school children and their parents are truly second class citizens in the minds of elected officials.

We do appreciate all of the efforts that you are making and will continue to make to provide the citizens of New Jersey with the best possible services within available dollars in the State Budget for 2017, and we hope that you will recognize our need to assist our students with these valuable health and safety provisions, as well as technology.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our requests.

Submitted by: George V. Corwell, Ed.D.  
Director, Office of Education, New Jersey Catholic Conference  
[gcorwell@njcathconf.com](mailto:gcorwell@njcathconf.com)

Mary McElroy, Esq.  
Director of the New Jersey Network of Catholic School Families for the Diocese  
of Newark