

TESTIMONY OF RITA C. SCHWARTZ
BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE LABOR RELATIONS COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2626

SEPTEMBER 18, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Labor Relations Committee. I am appreciative of the opportunity to speak again before this Committee. I testified in support of House Bill 2626 during the first hearing on August 18, 2008.

It is of vital importance that the thousands of non-unionized teachers in Catholic schools be provided with the tools they need to secure union representation and collective bargaining, if they wish to exercise these rights. At the present time, they are employees at will and their job security and due process are solely in the hands of the Ordinary of their Dioceses. House Bill 2626 will provide these teachers with a level playing field. That is all we are asking.

In the course of my testimony on August 18th, I was asked questions by both Rep. DePasquale and Rep. Waters concerning unionized teachers and how they felt about their jobs. Rep. DePasquale specifically wanted to know if unionized teachers in Catholic schools would come before the Committee to put forth their belief that they are able to perform better as teachers because they are organized.

I am happy to be here today with educators representing five of the six unionized Systems in Pennsylvania. You will hear the history of these teachers before they were represented by a union as well as what is happening today. You will hear the difference a union has made for the teachers seated with me and for their fellow teachers.

You will also hear how different the situation is for their unorganized colleagues. These teachers include elementary teachers in the Archdiocese of

Philadelphia and elementary and high school teachers in the Dioceses of Harrisburg, Erie and Scranton. They remain employees at will and, as Rep. DePasquale noted, not in a strong position because of their lack of ability to organize.

Once again, I put forth to you that the Catholic elementary and secondary schools throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania should not have to leave their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse door.

I will now turn the microphone over to the panel.

Thank You.

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