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HARRISBURG

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Statement in Response to Senate Bill 1

Senate Bill 1 is entitled the Pennsylvania Opportunity Scholarship Act. According to its sponsors, the bill is designed to promote and expand school choice options in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I have thoroughly reviewed SB1 and discussed it with the Pennsylvania State Education Association, parents, students, advocacy groups, teachers, school administrators and community leaders. My guiding principle in these discussions was Article III, Section 14 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania which states:

"The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth."

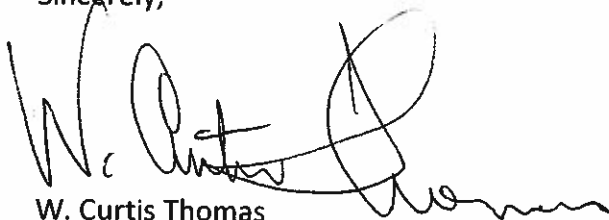
With this guiding principle in mind, I have reached the conclusion that SB1 is an assault on public education and public values. It is pure fiction to believe that this bill will promote or expand school choice options for the average parent. In reality, SB1 will cut public dollars out of public schools and deposit these funds in the hands of private, parochial, and charter school operators. Unlike public schools these private operators do not have a public mandate to educate all students; they do not have to disclose behavioral incidents; and in many cases they do not have to participate in the state PSSA exams. More importantly, SB1 does nothing to implement a public mandate either.

Without holding private operators to the same standards as our public schools, there can be no transparency or accountability in the use of our public tax dollars. I am unwilling to accept a

proposal that gives away tax dollars to private operators without or any mechanism in place to determine whether the public is getting any value for its investment.

In the SB1 Fact Sheet I attempt to dispel some of the myths surrounding SB1. Please feel free to contact my offices if you have any questions regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Curtis Thomas', written over a horizontal line.

W. Curtis Thomas

State Representative, 181st Legislative District