



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: P: 573.635.7239 F: 573.635.7431
600 Clark Avenue, P.O. Box 1022, Jefferson City, MO, 65102-1022
mocatholic@mocatholic.org www.MOcatholic.org

Catholic High School President Calls for Equal Access to A+ Scholarships

February 8, 2011, JEFFERSON CITY, MO — College scholarships should be available to both public and private high school graduates, according to George Wingbermuehle, president of St. Francis Borgia Regional High School in Washington, Mo.

Wingbermuehle addressed the Higher Education Committee of the Missouri House, which is considering expanding the A+ Scholarship Program. House Bill 232, sponsored by State Rep. Mike Thomson (R-Maryville), would expand A+ scholarships to more public high school students, but it would continue to exclude graduates of private and religious-affiliated high schools.

Wingbermuehle mentioned one Catholic high school student who graduated with a 3.5 GPA and met all other program requirements but could not receive a scholarship, while his friend went to a public high school, graduated with a 2.5 GPA and received the scholarship.

Wingbermuehle emphasized that the scholarships are not about the schools, but about the students, and that the schools' religious affiliations should not be a factor.

A+ scholarships provide financial assistance with the cost of books, tuition and fees required at any community college or vocational or technical school in Missouri.

To qualify, high school students must graduate with a 2.5 GPA, a 95 percent attendance record, must have performed 50 hours of unpaid tutoring of younger students, and maintained a record of good citizenship and the avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs or alcohol.

Wingbermuehle told the committee his students could meet the various A+ criteria but could not participate at present because they attended a Catholic high school. He said this was discriminatory and that all kids that met the A+ criteria should be able to participate.

Gov. Nixon called for expansion of the A+ scholarship program in his State of the State address.

Wingbermuehle said approximately \$300,000 in financial aid is distributed to the 550 students at St. Francis Borgia each year and that many of them don't have the financial means to attend college. He asked the committee

to amend the bill to include all high school students because private school students deserve a right to the scholarships as well.

For additional information contact Melissa Varner with the Missouri Catholic Conference at 573.635.7239 or varnerm@mocatholic.org.