



November 2, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for your dedication to the Catholic Church and the schools in the Diocese of Joliet. Today I write to share with you an exciting and unprecedented opportunity for Catholic education that requires all of our attention. In August, the Illinois House and Senate passed a comprehensive education funding bill which was signed into law by the governor. In the weeks since, more and more details are emerging. The bill includes a new five-year program for Tax Credit Scholarships (TCS) for students in private schools that will create more equity in school funding throughout Illinois.

As you are a valued partner in our diocese, I have included a brief overview of the tax credit scholarship program, and the opportunity it provides for students, their families, and potential donors.

- Under the TCS program, individuals and corporations can make donations to a Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) that will distribute scholarships to qualified students (described below). In the interest of time and efficiency we have joined with the other Illinois dioceses in using "Empower Illinois" as our SGO.
- Individual and corporate donors will receive a 75% state tax credit for donations up to \$1 million made to an SGO. Individual donors can designate their donation to an individual school, subset of schools, or a school system such as the Diocese of Joliet schools. Corporate donations cannot be designated and will be distributed ratably across the state.
- Students in grades K-12 may receive tax credit scholarships beginning with the 2018/2019 school year. To qualify for tax credit scholarships, families must earn less than 300 percent of the federal poverty level. In the first months of the program, applications from students with the greatest financial need, as well as those who reside in school districts with significant challenges, will be prioritized. More information on applications will be forthcoming when it is provided by the state.

Tax credits will be available on a first come, first served basis beginning January 2, 2018. As there is a limit to the amount of tax credits available, it is important we move quickly to ensure we do not lose the opportunity to have the funds designated to Diocese of Joliet schools. Strong interest may cause this cap to be reached very quickly. More information will be provided from the diocese as it becomes available.

In the meantime, I invite you to visit www.dioceseofjoliet.org/ILTCSP to learn more. Please consider this opportunity with an open heart and I thank you for your dedication to the Diocese of Joliet.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Daniel Conlon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend R. Daniel Conlon
Bishop of Joliet