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Bill Number:

7348

State of Connecticut

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
JAMES A. AMANN

EDUCATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
Monday, March 12, 2007

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 7348
An Act Concerning After School and Out-of-School Time Grants**

Speaker Amann (118th District- Milford) strongly supports the expansion of Connecticut's After School and Out-of-School Time programs, added quality enhancements and evaluation measures included in HB 7348. With the new dollars toward the After School competitive grant, thousands of more students will have the opportunity to engage in enrichment activities.

Good afternoon, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Gaffey, Representative Hovey and Senator Herlihy. Thank you very much for raising HB 7348 in support of expanded afterschool and out-of-school time programs as well as the opportunity to express my strong support for worthy programs that help our students reach their potential. Due to a scheduling conflict, I am unable to attend today's hearing personally, but sincerely thank Rep. Betty Boukus for championing afterschool in my place.

A complement to the classroom, after school programs provide our youth with "a safe place to learn and grow." Over the past two years, the Education Committee, in particular, and the General Assembly have recognized the importance of after school by establishing a very successful standards-based, competitive grant program that benefits Connecticut's many local after school programs.

Today, I strongly urge your support for HB 7348 – it enhances quality, requires accountability and adds funding to increase afterschool access to thousands of students. First, the bill expands grant eligibility from 1 year to 2 years to enable greater program consistency and better focus on direct services to students. Second, grant recipients must now provide performance outcomes such as participating students' achievement, school attendance, and in-school behavior for example.

Today, there is plenty of research available that demonstrates that quality matters if we want to achieve positive outcomes for our youth. This legislation enables the Department of Education to provide technical assistance, program monitoring, evaluation and professional development – a piece of the afterschool grant program previously left out. And, simply put, we need to continue to enhance quality if we want our students to become productive, skilled individuals in the modern, global economy. We need our afterschool programs to reinforce classroom lessons through hands-on, experiential learning opportunities. STEM-based programs are an excellent way to captivate our students' imaginations and prepare them for the future.

Finally, I ask that you increase the budget for the Afterschool Competitive Grant program from \$3.1 million to \$7.1 million in FY08 and to \$7.6 million in FY09. As you know, the need for quality programs is great and the opportunity to complement classroom learning should not be passed up. By linking funding to performance measurements, we can go along way to improving quality in afterschool.

Thank you very much for your time today and consideration of afterschool funding in the coming weeks.