

Connecticut Virtual Learning Center

Education Committee Public Hearing
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Testimony
by
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Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee. My name is Mary Bidwell, a Teacher for Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC) and Program Coordinator for Enfield Adult and Continuing Education in Enfield, CT. I am here today to support Raised Bill 7354.

My involvement with Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium over the past four years has been in a variety of capacities. I have developed courses, such as Algebra, Financial Literacy, Geometry, and On-line GED Preparation. I have been a mentor to students as they take on-line classes and currently, I am the teacher for the On-Line Financial Literacy, Geometry, and GED Mathematics Preparation courses. Over the past three years, I have attended the Virtual School Symposium (VSS) Conferences, which were presented by the North American Council for On-Line Learning (NACOL). These conferences were held in Georgia, Colorado and most recently in Texas. I have learned a great deal from attending these conferences and see the value that on-line learning affords students across the country. I can attest to the fact that students do learn in an on-line environment. Many even thrive in this situation, because they feel more comfortable in an on-line environment than in a face to face classroom setting. Students finally feel free to participate in on-line class discussions and give real thought to their responses.

Furthermore, as program coordinator for Enfield Adult and Continuing Education, I visit guidance counselors in our Adult Education Cooperative who state they have limited options for students who are lacking credits for graduation. Counselors' wish their students would be able to take on-line courses such as the ones offered to our Adult Education population to earn the credits they need. By offering a Credit Recovery option to high school students under this bill, it is my firm belief that more students would be able to stay in school, attain their high school diploma, and graduate with their respective class. In speaking with teachers and administrators from across the United States whom have attended the Virtual School Symposium (VSS) conferences, they have shown success in having a virtual school option for their students focusing on Credit Recovery. It would be wonderful to see this groundbreaking opportunity, as well as the additional components of this bill, available to our students right here in Connecticut.

On-line learning may not be for every student, but unless you afford him or her the opportunity to try, you may never know. I know I am fortunate to be a part of such a wonderful option for students in adult education. These students are already being successful on-line, this bill will allow a wider range of students the same opportunities for success. The possibilities are endless for the State of Connecticut and it's students. Please consider supporting Raised Bill 7354, in the end, you will be changing student's lives for the better and preparing them for their future in the workforce and in their life. Thank you for your time.