



February 16, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am here to testify on Senate bill #1114. My name is Matthew Nittoly and I am the Director of Side By Side Community School. Currently celebrating our 10th year in existence, Side By Side Community School exemplifies the potential achievements and successes that can be attained by the alternative approaches of Connecticut's Charter Schools. Our collaborative and autonomous approach towards curriculum and governance, coupled with our experiential, constructivist ways of teaching, has led to success in the minds, hearts and souls of many young children and their families.

This past decade has provided a variety of examples of the capabilities and accomplishments of students that have attended Side by Side. Fortunately, we have now been in existence long enough that we are able to examine the progress of students that have remained at Side by Side for several years. The past two 8th grade graduating classes at Side by Side School represented the first groups of students that had been enrolled here throughout the elementary and middle school grades. The CMT scores of these students not only represent significant achievement, but more importantly demonstrate the drastic growth that was attained while here.

- 91% of the 8th Grade class of 2006 scored at the "Proficient" level or higher on *all three* of the designated test areas for the CMT (Math, Reading and Writing).
- Nearly 100% (all but one student) scored at the "Proficient" level or higher on the Mathematics and Writing portion of the 8th grade CMT
- A cohort-analysis of students that have taken the CMT test while enrolled at Side by Side as 4th, 6th and 8th grade students demonstrated extreme growth that occurred during their time here. While only 8% of this group had met the CMT "Proficiency" standard in all areas as 4th graders, 60% of that same group did so upon graduating 4 years later.

Although we are proud of what we have achieved during this past decade, we are certain, that if given the financial support needed, we can sustain and further improve upon our goals well into the future. Side by Side is fortunate to have such a dedicated community of people involved in the operation of our school on a daily basis. Through extensive collaboration and volunteered time, our Board of Directors, School Planning Team, Finance Committee, and staff are constantly working to make the best use of the limited and often outdated resources that are available. Unfortunately, the expenses associated with maintaining a reasonable facility, offering competitive teacher salaries & benefits, and the need to keep up with many technological advances in education have risen at a much greater rate than the funding with which we are provided. By virtue of prudent planning, cutting costs, and soliciting donations from a variety of private sources we have been able to maintain our programs without having to sacrifice any major services to our families. However, it is only a matter of time before this 'band-aid' approach will no longer suffice.

In closing, it is with great honor that I am given the opportunity to represent such a warm and embracing, yet rigorous and demanding, educational institution. Our successes over the past decade go much further than numbers and test scores can dictate. As demonstrated by the many current and past students of Side By Side Community School, our children learn to be proud of who they are and to be comfortable enough to question the world around them. It is our hope that increased future funding will enable our staff, parents, and students to continue with and improve upon the successes and achievements we have demonstrated since our inception.

Respectfully,

Matthew Nittoly
Director

10 Chestnut Street . Norwalk . CT . 06854 . 203 857-0306 . 203 838-2666 fax