



SCOTT SHANLEY, GENERAL MANAGER

Town of Manchester

41 Center Street • P.O. Box 191
Manchester, Connecticut 06045-0191
www.ci.manchester.ct.us

JOSH M. HOWROYD, MAYOR
LISA P. O'NEILL, DEPUTY MAYOR
KEVIN L. ZINGLER, SECRETARY

DIRECTORS
JASON E. DOUCETTE
MATTHEW B. PEAK
CHERI A. PELLETIER
DAVID M. SHERIDAN
LOUIS A. SPADACCINI
JOHN D. TOPPING

Testimony of Alan J Desmarais, Director of Finance, Town of Manchester to the Joint Committee on Human Services in support of:

Proposed S.B. No. 808 (2007) - AN ACT CONCERNING STATE GRANTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF HEAD START FACILITIES

February 13, 2007

To the Joint Committee on Human Services,

Thank you for the opportunity today to speak in favor of Proposed S.B. No. 808. The proposed bill will provide financial support to municipalities to defray costs incurred in the design, construction or renovation of Head Start facilities. Under current State Statutes, Head Start programs are not considered within the basic mandate of local Boards of Education. Some local Boards of Education, like Manchester, understanding the importance of providing preschool educational services prior to entry into kindergarten have included Head Start in their educational activities even though it is not mandated. Head Start is one of the first programs that begin to level the playing field for all children.

The cost for a local Board of Education to operate a Head Start program is significantly higher than that of 501(c)(3) or other non municipal support structures. The local Board of Education must provide certified teaching staff hired with collectively bargained salaries and benefits, as well as the significant administrative support to the Head Start program. Since the provision of a preschool program like Head Start is not in the basic local mandate, the Head Start program competes with mandated programs for funding and support. This not only occurs within the annual school budgeting process, but also with the capital funding of the school infrastructure.

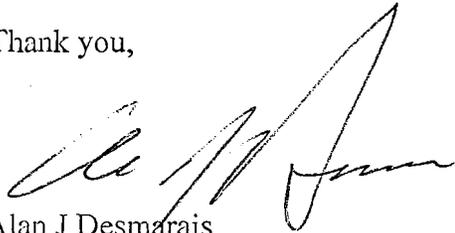


Head Start program can currently qualify for State partial building reimbursement grants, but the local match in most towns and in Manchester must be formally adopted through a local referendum. It is at this point that a non mandated preschool program such as Head Start must compete for local construction funding dollars. Manchester voters recently approved over \$90,000,000 of improvements to its local schools at referendum. Local Boards of Education must first address the capital needs of Statutorily mandated educational programs. Programs like Head Start that address critical societal needs are thus often left to seek local financial and political support at the expense of mandated classroom programs.

Proposed Senate bill 808 would provide a separate and non competitive funding source for municipal Head Start facilities that face these higher operating costs. The proposed bill would not fund the operations of the Head Start program but only assist towns with the capital needs.

I request that you look positively on this proposal. I will address any questions you might have at this time.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan J Desmarais', written in a cursive style.

Alan J Desmarais
Director of Finance
Town of Manchester