

Testimony in support of bill #5758  
An act eliminating discrepancies in regulations governing use of  
school facilities.

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Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Sharon Tripp and I am from East Windsor. I support bill #5758 with suggestions to improve an act eliminating discrepancies in regulations governing use of school facilities.

My non-profit organization Organized Parents Make A Difference offers after school enrichment programs in 6 of the Hartford public schools. We serve 550 students each day. The students come to us at 2:30 and most go home at 6:00. While they are in our program they are involved in literacy based enrichment activities. **We are not a day care.**

In December I received a letter from the Health Department stating that my program requires licensing. I immediately called the Health Department and learned that if I were to change our program so that it is strictly recreational with no educational component then licensing would not be necessary. According to the regulations this is what makes our program a "day care". I was also told that if I continued to operate this program without a license my organization would be subject to a penalty of up to \$100 per day.

I was a camp director for many years before coming to Hartford to run this agency. I stood here in front of this committee many times in support of camp licensing. I know the importance of over site in this manner. My concern is the regulations addressed in this bill make little sense. Currently the regulations are written to include strict language concerning the facility in which the program is held. If we were to apply for a license we would surely be denied due to the fact that we run our programs in a public school building. The requirements are not appropriate for programs that take place at school sites. I see little logic in the fact that the school is deemed to be safe until 2:30 then something metaphysical happens to the building and it is no longer safe for the rest of the afternoon!

The impact of being forced to comply with regulations to be licensed as a day care will force our program to close and leave 550 children without supervision after school. Hartford ranks at the bottom of the list for CMT scores. Our children need extra academic support. We should not be put in a position to choose between education and recreation, just to keep our programs from being closed.

This will also negatively effect all other community based organizations, leaving many more inner-city children with out services. If we are forced to comply with these regulations we will need to close our doors leaving 60+ employees out of work, hundreds of parents scrambling to find after school support and many employers forced to address absenteeism in their workforce.

I support this proposed bill, however, I feel that the Commissioner of Public Health should not be the only person amending the language concerning regulations for after school programs. I believe that a committee of service providers should be involved in any amendments made to the regulations.