



**Testimony to the Education Committee regarding Raised House Bill No. 7348**

***AN ACT CONCERNING AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS***

***March 12, 2007***

***By David Davison, President & CEO, American Savings Foundation***

The American Savings Foundation is a private, independent charitable foundation serving an area comprised of 64 towns in Connecticut. We do this by issuing grants to community organizations, and by awarding college scholarships. This year alone we will provide approximately \$3.6 million in total funding, with the majority going towards direct services for children, youth and families. We are providing significant grant support to expand and improve after-school programs. This includes a major funding initiative in our home base town of New Britain, which is a priority school district.

After-school programs are a great investment for at-risk children. It keeps them safe, helps bridge the academic achievement gap, promotes school attendance, improves behavior and reduces the drop-out rate. Our initiative is helping to support the collaboration of existing youth development programs in New Britain in order use available resources more effectively to serve more children.

Part of that effort includes the New Britain Youth Network. This is an affiliation of 26 youth development agencies dedicated to working together to advance the after-school agenda for the children and families of the city. The Foundation is convening and supporting the New Britain Youth Network.

Frankly, private philanthropy cannot be a substitute for government support for youth programs on a broad basis. An initiative like ours will be far more effective if it works in conjunction with increased State funding. If New Britain youth programs are able to obtain additional state support, this will attract additional private and corporate funders to invest more in after-school programs. The New Britain Youth Network is demonstrating how agencies can collaborate on a community-wide basis, working with the schools, parents groups, community leaders, local funders and state agencies to address youth issues.

After-school programs should not be a luxury that only some children can afford. In studying the availability of programs in New Britain we found that a majority of children are not able to access after-school programs. We believe the state, city and private sector must invest more together to provide high quality programs for these children.

Public Hearing Testimony <sup>non-speaking</sup> Speaker:

David Davison

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