

**Mr. Robert Doss**  
**49-C Mencil Circle**  
**Bridgeport, CT 06608**

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:  
*Robert Doss*

Date: *3/12/07* Bill Number: *1408*

**Members of the Education Committee,**

For the past ten years I have been a teacher at The Bridge Academy in Bridgeport, Connecticut. At the Bridge Academy I teach U.S. History and I run the school's college planning class. As the college-planning teacher I have helped the school ensure that every student leaves The Bridge Academy with a college acceptance. This year is no exception: our 30 graduating seniors have already received a total of more than 60 college acceptances, including 5 at the University of Connecticut. I am very proud to be part of such a high-performing school.

The Bridge Academy performs so well because every employee understands the importance our mission. Together we work to prepare our students for college. Because we are such a small community we cannot make excuses. We must find ways for all our children to succeed, and the answers for our students must come from within our school. We do not have the time or the luxury to play "the blame game" --along with the charter to operate our school we understand we also make a promise to get results for our children. Indeed, the success of Connecticut's charter schools is grounded in a **simple but powerful idea**: greater autonomy for principals and teachers to develop innovative approaches to raising student performance in exchange for greater accountability for results. **The past decade has proven that this approach works for kids.**

Some have said that when charter schools first got started, they promised to do more with less—and we certainly have over the past ten years. We receive just \$8,000 per pupil in funding from the state which is thousands of dollars less than the average funding for public schools statewide, and even further below the average funding for urban public schools. Senate Bill 1408 would bring charter school funding up to the state average, which would still represent a tremendous value for the state, since the state average is still well below the spending levels of the urban communities in which Bridge Academy and many other charter schools are located. And in exchange for this funding, we are willing to be held accountable for raising student achievement in a groundbreaking way, as outlined in this Bill.

And I have to tell you that these funds are desperately needed. We face many costs that escalate more rapidly than we can afford: for instance, in order to attract and retain the high caliber of teaching staff that our kids deserve, our school is struggling to maintain a commitment to match the teaching pay scale of Bridgeport, our host district. Because of the success of my school, I urge you to support increasing the per-pupil funding for charter schools. For too long we have been under-funded. We have only been able to make do through the unbelievable hard work of our teachers and staff. We cannot expect our staff to continue their incredible work for much longer. Please help us.

In closing, I want to stress that better funding at The Bridge Academy would provide our students with academic services they desperately need. Specifically, we could provide a stronger academic program that includes all the AP courses and academic enrichment that our students need to compete with kids coming out of our suburban high schools. We know that with adequate funding we can build our school into a place where all of our students not only get accepted into college, they get accepted into the country's top colleges. Please consider supporting this vision by supporting Senate Bill 1408.

Sincerely,

Robert Doss