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Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:

Merle Harris

Date:

Public Hearing 3/12/07
Education Committee
March 12, 2007

Bill Number:

7348

**Testimony by
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Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, Members of the Education Committee:

It gives me great pleasure to speak to you today in support of **H.B. 7348, An Act Concerning After School and Out-of-School Time Grants.**

After school programs are not a luxury in today's society. They are essential. Two-thirds of Connecticut children ages 6-12 have working parents. Unsupervised hours after school are an invitation for trouble. After school programs provide a safe environment, keep youth engaged, and deter delinquent behavior.

Second, as a myriad of recent reports have shown, our children are not performing as well as children in many other countries. This is particularly true in math and science. High quality after school programs are one way to change these statistics. It has been shown that school-linked after school programs can increase interest in school and can provide learning opportunities that extend beyond the standard school day.

The General Assembly began addressing the expansion of after school programs last year. I am pleased that HB7348 not only provides additional funding but also calls for performance outcomes. It is essential that as we invest state funds we focus on program quality.

Charter Oak State College is playing a role in raising the quality of after school experiences by providing an opportunity for workers in the field of after school education to earn an After School Educator Credential. The credential, which was developed with the After School Network and Connecticut-Charts-A-Course, establishes educational and experiential competency standards for after school educators. Charter Oak offers four, three-credit online courses that can be taken to meet the credential requirements. In addition, candidates submit a professional resource file and must complete 240 hours of supervised experience in an after school program. Those who hold the credential are ready to contribute to the development and the delivery of quality, enriching after school experiences.

High quality and affordable after school programs are important for our young people. Therefore, I encourage you to pass H.B. 7348.

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