

The New Britain Youth Network 185 Main St. New Britain, CT 06051

March 12, 2007

To: Education Committee regarding Raised House Bill No. 7348
Re: In Support of Additional Funding for After School Programs

The New Britain Youth Network is a collaboration of youth development agencies and programs that have come together to work on an ongoing basis to ensure that every child in our city has access to the best quality after-school programs. The Network was formed two years ago to improve and expand after-school programs across the city, and we are working collaboratively to put all available resources to maximum use. We enthusiastically advocate for the passage of the proposed legislation to help fund after-school programs in Connecticut. A grant of \$150,000 would be used by New Britain agencies in a coordinated and cooperative manner to further these goals.

National research – and our own local experience as youth development service providers – tells us that after-school programs work. They help at-risk children do better in school, and keep them safe and out of trouble in after school hours. They provide support for working families and strengthen underserved communities. In New Britain, where the drop-out rate and teen pregnancy rate are both very serious problems, only 22% of approximately 2500 middle school students are regularly attending after-school programs. Transportation is a major issue. So is lack of space and facilities. Because of inadequate resources, many good youth programs can't provide the level of high quality programming that children need and deserve.

The New Britain Youth Network is a voluntary coalition of agencies, facilitated and supported by the American Savings Foundation which has a major commitment to funding after-school programs. The City of New Britain and its school system are key partners as well. It will take funding from a variety of public and private sources to advance this agenda for children in our city, to implement after-school programs at the scale and quality that is needed. Funds provided by the State for after-school programs in last year's budget have provided a tremendous stimulus to the cause of youth development work for Connecticut's most needy children. Support from the state is absolutely essential, and should be increased.

After-school programs should not be a luxury that only some children can afford. The New Britain Youth Network is committed to this agenda for the long haul. Our agencies are devoting energy and resources into after-school programming because it works. We hope the State will increase its commitment to this effort as well. Thank you.

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:
Nm - Speaking
New Britain Youth Network

Date: *3/12/07*
Bill Number: *7348*
Connecticut Virtuosi Symphony Orchestra

th Network Members

- Engineering Program
- Central Connecticut Center
- Connecticut Trails Council
- Teen Pregnancy
- at of SW New England
- Klingberg Family Centers
- New Britain Museum of American Art
- New Britain Symphony
- Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters
- OIC of New Britain
- United Labor Agency
- United Way of New Britain & Berlin
- Vision New Britain
- YMCA New Britain/Berlin
- YWCA New Britain