

## **Education Committee Hearing – February 13, 2007**

**Chairpersons, Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and Members of the Committee**

**I am here to express support for Bill #1061 to increase funding for Vocational Agriculture to \$2500 per student.**

**I am George Wheeler, from North Canaan, Chairman of the State Consultant Committee for Agriculture Education. Our committee is made up of representatives from industry, superintendents, Department of Agriculture, support groups, Ct Farm Bureau, and others from across the state. At the request of the Commissioner of Education, our committee conducted a cost analysis and benefits of the Vocational Agriculture programs in Connecticut for the 2004-05 year. The Ag Ed Programs in Connecticut are:**

- **Part of the Choice School programs.**
- **Offered at 19 Centers – All interested students in the state have a right to apply.**
- **And they are a State Regulated Program consisting of three essential and equal components – Leadership (FFA), Supervised Agriculture Experience, and class room instruction.**

**The survey findings for the 2004-2005 school year showed us:**

1. **Ag Ed student numbers have increased by 45% in the last ten years.**
2. **58% of all ag students are from out of district.**
3. **The average program operating cost was \$4,367 per student served.**
4. **The average state revenue provided to the host schools was \$789/student for the operating costs.**
5. **The average cost per student in the 19 high schools was \$10,355.**
6. **The host schools received up to \$7069 for tuition per student from the sending towns plus the state money resulting in an average shortfall of \$2497 for all Out of District students.**
7. **The average shortfall for all agriculture students was \$3144.**
8. **Twenty years ago the ag programs were reimbursed by the state for nearly 100% of the operating costs. In 2004-2005 state support stood at 20%.**
9. **The study also compares the state allocations of funds for all the Choice Programs in Connecticut. I have included a chart in my hand out.**

**These results are two years old and costs have increased since this survey.**

**Comments from the survey included:**

- **Ag Ed is a model education program.**
- **Host centers had to absorb more than \$2500 per out of district student for the past 10 years.**
- **Host schools are questioning why they should accept students from other towns and subsidize their education.**
- **Sending schools are limiting their student participation due to the associated costs.**
- **We need to reinstate a full time qualified ag ed consultant in the department of Education to see that the legislation for this program is followed.**

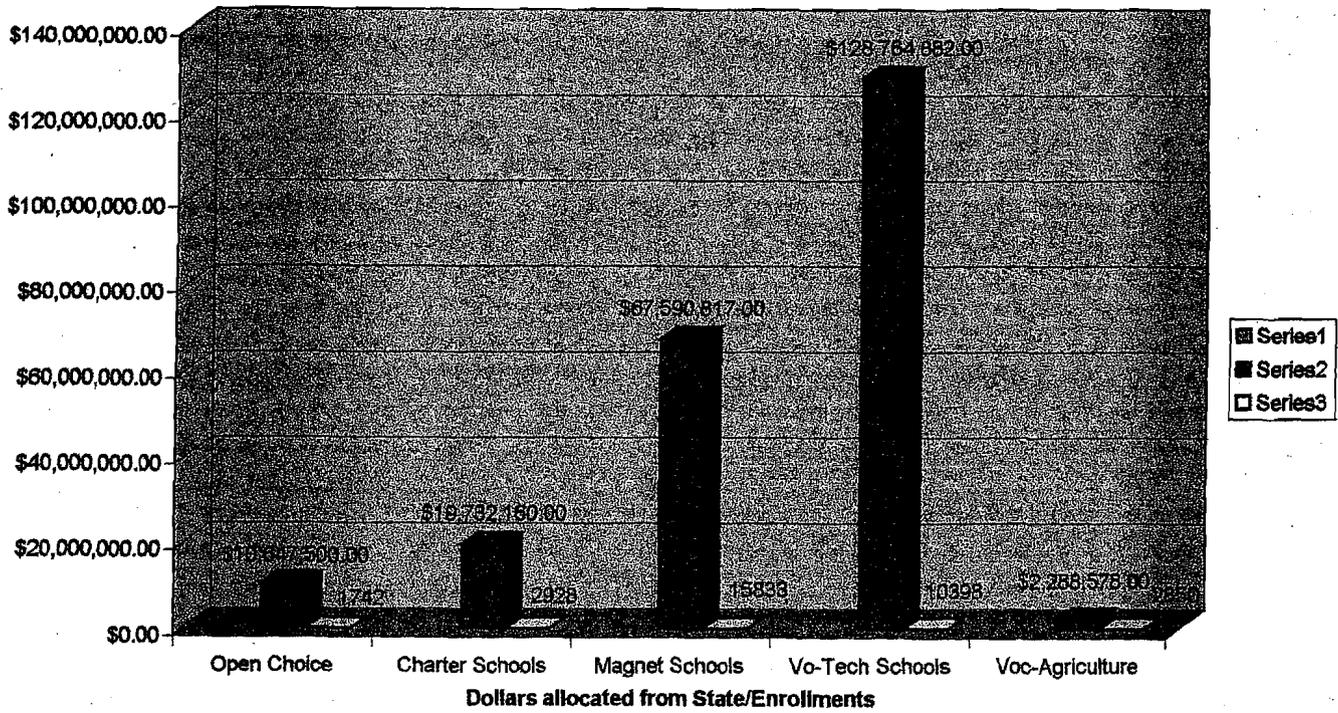
**At a time when we are all concerned about No Child Left Behind, Diversity, equal access for all students, the application of science and math, and most important the needs of our industry, it is important for you to know that the Agricultural Programs are doing their job and doing it very well.**

**Our committee supports this bill 100% and we thank you for your efforts in providing our students an opportunity to be part of the agriculture industry and all it includes.**

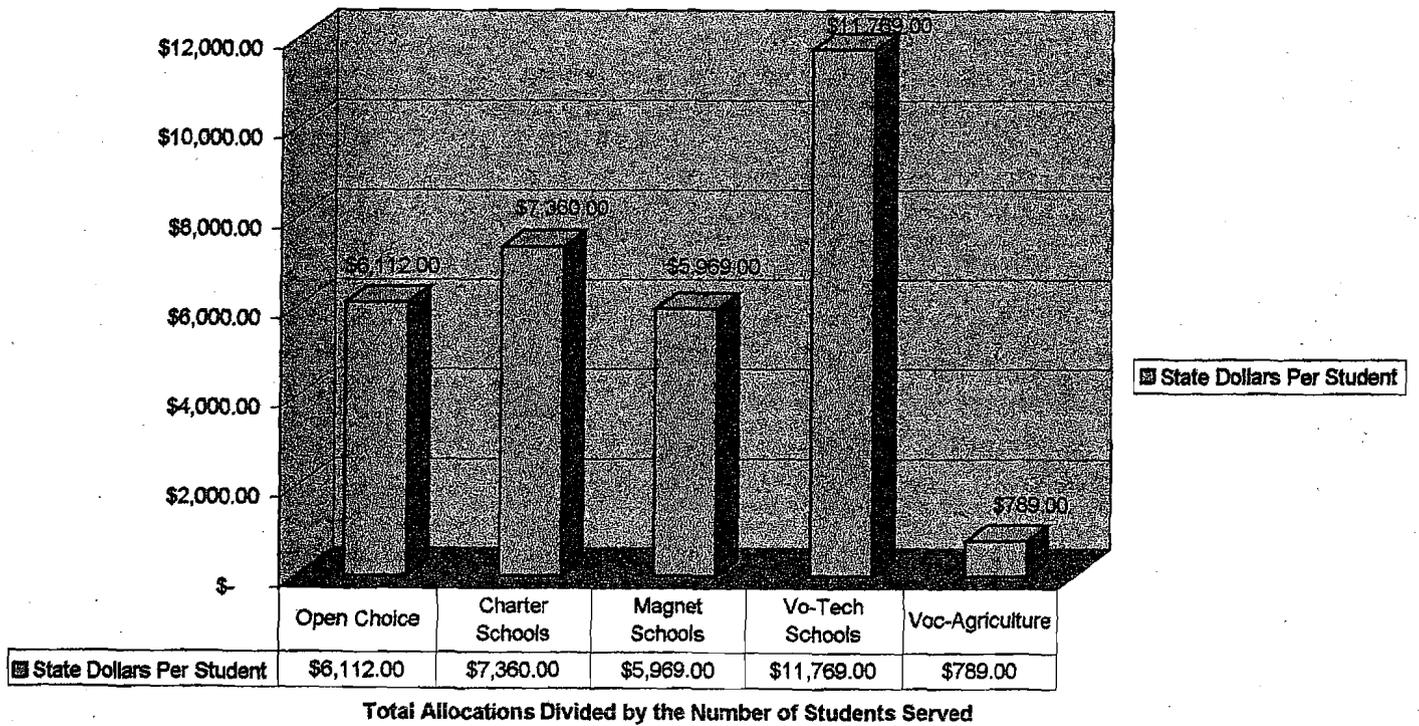
**Thank you**

**Chart 5 – Choice Schools – 2004-2005 Allocation of State Funds -**

**State Budget Support**

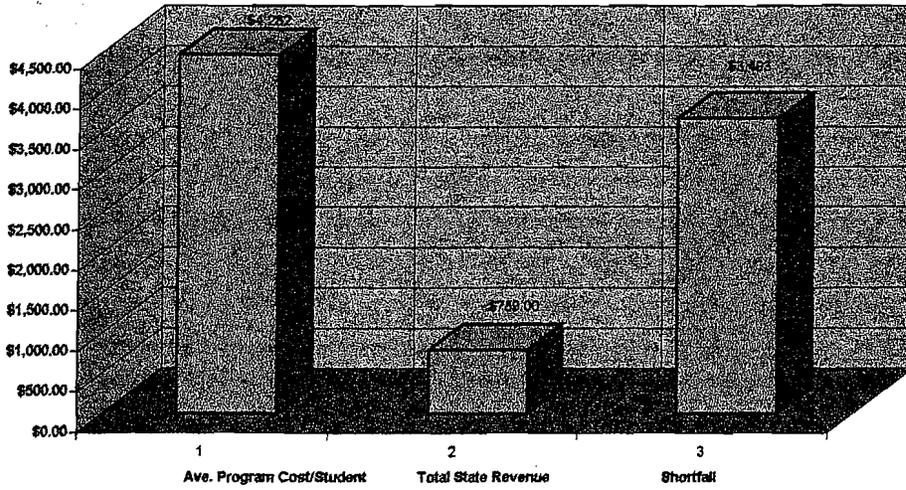


**State Dollars per Student**

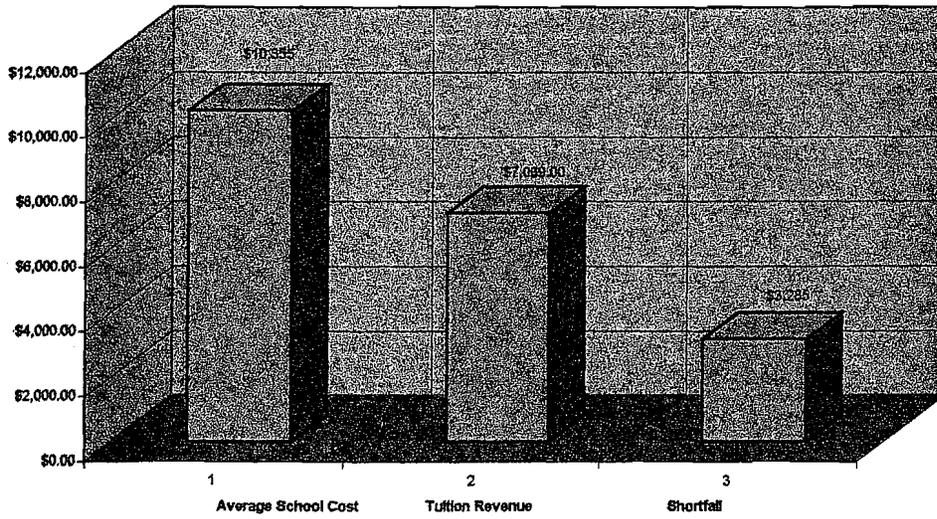


**Total Allocations Divided by the Number of Students Served**

Vocational Agriculture Programs  
Total Cost - Total State Revenue 2004-2005



Out of District Student Costs



Out of District Cost and Revenue per Student 2004-2005

