



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
JAMES A. AMANN

Human Services Committee PUBLIC HEARING
Tuesday, February 6, 2007

Testimony in SUPPORT of
House Bill No. 6274, AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE
AMER-I-CAN FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the committee:

I am joined today by House Minority Leader Rep. Larry Cafero and Chief Operating Officer of the Amer-I-Can program, Dean Renfrow. We are all here to express support for **House Bill No. 6274, AAC Appropriating Funds for the Amer-I-Can Foundation for Social Change.**

The Amer-I-Can Foundation was founded in 1988 by NFL Hall of Fame running back Jim Brown. Since its inception the Foundation has worked with thousands of children throughout the United States in an effort to improve self-esteem and self-determination by teaching a life management-skills curriculum.

The Foundation teaches that success is not only for the elite or wealthy but for those who want it, plan for it and take action to achieve it.

From 1998 to 2002 the Amer-I-Can program worked with high schools in six Connecticut cities. The results were amazing: of the 1,122 students who completed the Amer-I-Can program, GPA's rose 18%, absences dropped by 27% and participant schools saw a 73% decrease in disciplinary incidents. These outcomes show that Amer-I-Can is an extremely good investment for our children.

Sadly, funds for the program were cut due to budget constraints.

I'd like to remind the Committee of our 20/20 Vision Plan for Connecticut, passed last year with unanimous legislative support. 20/20 Vision calls for 10% of the state's spending on children to go toward prevention by the year 2020. The Amer-I-Can program and mission is a model 20/20 Vision program.

It is my hope that the committee will support bringing this worthy program back to Connecticut.