

Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee

March 9, 2009

SENATE BILL NO. 830 AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S
RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING EDUCATION

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischmann, and fellow members of the Education Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Alan Addley and I am superintendent of the Granby Public Schools. I am here to ask the State of Connecticut to fully fund the cost of magnet school tuitions and to support the commissioner of education's request to increase the subsidy that suburban districts receive for accepting urban students through the Open Choice program. The current level of state funding is not adequate to fulfill the constitutional, moral, and social obligations to the children of the Greater Hartford region.

Due to the recently passed Parent Choice legislation and the expansion of magnet schools, our tuition payments continue to rise. There is no control over the number of local students who attend magnet schools and the costs to districts are unpredictable. Recently received tuition requests made by the Hartford Public Schools to pay for Hartford host magnet schools complicate and compound things even further.

Granby has willingly participated in Open Choice (formerly Project Concern) since its inception over thirty years ago and we are currently the highest participating district in the state with an Open Choice enrollment of 3.4% with plans to increase this further. We have faithfully paid the tuition for students to participate in regional magnet school programs and we have enthusiastically enrolled Hartford students through the Open Choice program. We have done so because it has been the right thing to do for Hartford and Granby students.

However, we cannot continue to participate at this level with the current level of state funding. The costs are not incidental. Tight budgets and staff reductions compound the problem. As you know, the current level of Choice funding is \$2,500 per student. Granby's cost per student minus transportation and special education costs is close to \$10,000. The academic and social supports and programmatic needs associated with the Choice program are significant. Even if the state is fortunate enough to make some of its participation targets stipulated by the Sheff agreement, I am fearful that without adequate funding, equity of outcomes for Hartford students attending suburban schools will not be realized. We want our Hartford students graduating from Granby Public Schools equally prepared for college. Isn't equity of outcomes really what the Sheff agreement is all about? If not, it should be.

Tuition expenses for magnet schools are now cutting into our existing programs and services. The funds that we receive through Choice are not adequate

enough to support the costs for tuition in magnet schools and simultaneously provide for an equal education for the Hartford students attending Granby through the Choice program.

Under the governor's budget, the suburban towns will be asked to educate Hartford children at about twenty-percent of what it takes to educate a child in the state. We urge the legislature to fully fund magnet schools and embrace the commissioner of education's funding proposal for Choice.

If the state is serious about addressing the Sheff settlement and it is serious about resolving this constitutional, moral and equity issue, then it must take the responsibility for fully funding this effort. I am just hopeful, that in the meantime, you will not lose the good will of those local communities that believe in these initiatives.

Thank you for your time.