

WEST HAVEN COMMUNITY HOUSE ASSOCIATION, INC.

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December 8, 2009

To: Senator Toni Harp
State Representative John Geragosian
Members of the Legislative Committee

RE: After School Program funding

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The West Haven Community House (WHCH) is opposed to the Governor's proposed suspension of SDE After School Program funds. Suspension of these funds will result in a reduction of vital services to 100 West Haven middle school students. These students are identified for our Carrigan After School Program as the most in need of the guidance, tutoring and constructive activities that help build self-efficacy.

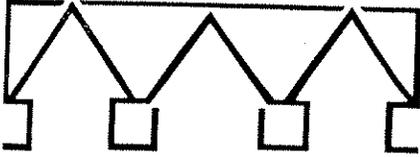
The Community House has provided after school services to children and families in West Haven since 1951. WHCH currently offers services in all eleven West Haven public schools, including after school care, after school enrichment, positive youth development, pregnancy prevention, dropout prevention, and workforce preparation. Some 500 students benefit from our programs each year.

Carrigan Middle School has a current enrollment of 712 students, including many of the neediest in the district. Sixty-nine percent of students receive free/reduced lunch. Sixty-two percent are minority and seven percent of the student population is English Language Learners (are in the English as a Second Language category). Most Minority students at Carrigan Middle School have yet to achieve the Adequate Yearly Progress goal in all No Child Left Behind measures. A primary goal of our program is to assist these students to improve their Connecticut Mastery Test scores so the school can attain "Safe Harbor" under No Child Left Behind.

Administrators at the school have taken further action to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress. The Carrigan After School Program is one of the measures that administrators have been supporting, with the assistance of the SDE grant, for nearly two years. We are seeing signs that improvement is underway. Eighth grade students show improvement on all areas of the test since our program began. The school and the Community House work closely to integrate activities that assist and expand classroom learning. Math and literacy specialists offer 6 hours of small group tutoring using proven strategies. Our academic enrichment activities expand on the concepts and themes the students are studying each day.

There is also encouraging news on behavioral measurements. Discipline referrals and office detentions have declined in the past year. The Community House is experienced in providing evidence-based positive youth development curricula that includes empathy/anger management and violence prevention, substance abuse education, health

Established in 1941, the West Haven Community House exists to facilitate healthy, productive, independent and meaningful lives for children, adolescents and families, and individuals with disabilities.



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and wellness, decision-making, leadership, and other skills young people need to develop to navigate these challenging years. Unfortunately, there is not enough time in the school day to assist these children with these critical skills. In far too many cases, parents and guardians are unable to model these positive behaviors.

Without SDE funding, the Community House will not be able to provide services at levels that make a positive difference for these children and our community. While we continue to seek and receive funding from other public and private sources, the majority of funds come from the After School grant. Please do everything in your power to preserve After School Program funding. It is a vital component in the future of our young people.

Respectfully,

Sharon Martin
Board President

Patricia Stevens
Executive Director