

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, Representative Fleishmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Chelsey Garcia and I'm an 11th grade student at the CREC Metropolitan Learning Center in Bloomfield.

I have been a part of the CREC program since elementary school. I have lived in Hartford, CT all my life, but I went to elementary school in Wethersfield as a Project Choice student. In elementary school I was one of the only minority students attending A.W. Hanmer. When I entered MLC in 7th grade I was surrounded by students of all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds and I felt like I was "home." These students weren't only Hispanic or African; these students were Asian, they were Caucasian, or they were interracial. MLC is so diverse that my friends actually joke around about calling ourselves the United Nations. The curriculum at the Metropolitan Learning Center is both unique and rigorous. MLC has an assortment of Honors, Advanced Placement and Virtual High School classes available for its students. The theme of our curriculum is Global and International Studies. There are amazing opportunities presented to us everyday at MLC. We have exchange students from all over the world attending MLC as well as hundreds of students traveling abroad every year. Attending MLC has enabled me to gain global awareness and appreciation. This in turn, made me open to the different social, political, cultural, economic, and religious practices of the world. This knowledge enables me to eradicate some of the common misconceptions made by the average American about the world. This is a positive step closer to global understanding and world peace. I know this has affected my fellow students in a similar positive manner. I am proud to say my school is a great school. We have been recognized by many organizations including the United States Department of Education as one of the most successful magnet programs in the country and by Goldman Sachs as the best school for international education.

After applying for a scholarship through one of the many international organizations with which my school partners, I received the Dewitt Wallace Face of America scholarship and spent the summer of my sophomore year in China. That opportunity has changed my life forever. Since then I have become so interested in traveling, I joined the Model UN group at MLC; I just recently was elected the Vice President of our O ambassadors club, and faithfully encourage my peers to travel. This year I will be traveling again with my French class to France over spring break and have applied to travel again this summer.

A student who attends a magnet school is unparalleled academically and is well rounded socially. I have also been able to stay connected with students in my home district. I have been a varsity cheerleader since freshman year at Bulkeley High School in Hartford. After school I am able to make practices and cheer at games for both football and basketball seasons. I am concerned about my peers in my home district. I know the town's and cities have to pay a great deal of money for magnet schools, and I don't want to see their programs cut because of magnet schools. They deserve the best education too.

As the product of a magnet school that is having a significant impact on my life and one that is helping me to choose a direction for my life, I ask you to fully fund the magnet school program. I want to emphasize that it is important for the future of Connecticut to provide a high quality education to all students, whether they choose to attend a magnet school or a district school. I thank you for the support you have given so I can benefit from such an outstanding education and ask that you fully fund these schools so that others have similar opportunities.