Testimony

Submitted to the

Education Committee

March 9, 2009

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

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Terry Schmitt, and I serve as Chair of the West Hartford Board of Education. Along with me today is Dr. Karen List, currently our Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, whom we recently chose to become our Superintendent starting July 1.

I appreciate the work of your committee and of the many years of dedicated service and concern for our state's school systems that has long been in evidence from the co-chairs of this committee, particularly regarding children whose life circumstances have made educational achievement both more important and more difficult. Your intentions and your commitment have been meaningful.

My concerns today are fairly simple conceptually, but often difficult legislatively and politically: in this period of extreme economic struggle, I ask that you do as little as possible to force local boards of education to do things -- even

those numbers, when the state's need is to raise those numbers.

This is but one of several examples of a fine intention encased in a dysfunctional system. Several of the bills before the committee now share that reality: good intentions, mandated to all schools, without any funding.

This is not just a bad year for mandates, this is a horrible year for mandates, because each one suggests that elected officials are spending time on trivialities when our fears for our school systems are both substantive and substantial.

So, while I deeply respect your work on this committee and your recognition of the importance of our schools, I ask you particularly this year to please try to limit the costs that even good ideas will inflict on us. In order to accomplish your laudable goals, please make sure the incentives work for us, and not against us.