

February 20, 2009

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Barbara Lindsey and I am the director of the Multimedia Language Center at the University of Connecticut. For two years (1996-1998) I also served as director of our Critical Languages Program. From 2004-2006 I was privileged to hold the office president of our state's official language organization, the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers, which has served Connecticut educators since 1968.

Working closely with faculty, students and programs at the University of Connecticut over the past thirteen years I have seen first hand the power of language learning, from students who work in our center to the graduate students we teach. In my Department of Modern & Classical Languages we offer a unique program called Linkage Through Language, which allows students to apply their language skills to selected courses in a variety of disciplines. My son, a political science major and film studies minor, took advantage of these courses, earning a certificate and notation in his transcripts. He now works for an international company here in Connecticut and was recently interviewed for the prestigious Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program. He was able to take these LTL courses because of his high school German courses. His prior language learning experiences have given him the foundation to learn other languages and to be receptive to and understanding of cross-cultural interactions. My daughter will graduate this June with a degree in environmental sciences and has expanded on her high school Spanish courses to improve her ability to work in her chosen field.

My children have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to take languages in high school and beyond. Many of our state's children have not been as fortunate. Their schools do not have the support needed to offer these educational opportunities so vital for full participation in our globally connected world. It is for these students in particular that we must insist on a two-year high school world language graduation requirement. As an educational technologist I can tell you that we now have the technology to provide creative means to engage all of our students in interactive, authentic and rigorous language learning experiences, regardless of where our students attend school. As a language educator I can share with you research that demonstrates the importance and value of high school language programs. A high school world language graduation requirement is doable and it is an ethical, educational and economic necessity for our children and our state.

In closing, I'd like to urge this committee to consider that:

A world language high school graduation requirement tells *all* of our students and their families, regardless of where our children go to school, that we care about their future in this globally interconnected and competitive world.

A world language high school graduation requirement tells our businesses that we are serious about preparing a workforce that can compete on a global playing field.