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**Testimony of Michelle Cruz, State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Education Committee
Monday, February 23, 2009**

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and distinguished members of the Education Committee. For the record my name is Michelle Cruz and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of:

Raised House Bill No. 6489, An Act Concerning School Arrest Reporting
Raised House Bill No. 6494, An Act Concerning Teen Dating Violence Education

One of the many responsibilities of the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) is to conduct programs of public education and outreach to the community. In December of 2007, the OVA sent letters to all colleges, universities and high schools around the state to offer the OVA as a resource to their institution. The response was overwhelming; the OVA visited numerous classes, varying from criminal justice to health awareness. The OVA discussed issues relating to victims' rights, teen violence, sexual assault and safety.

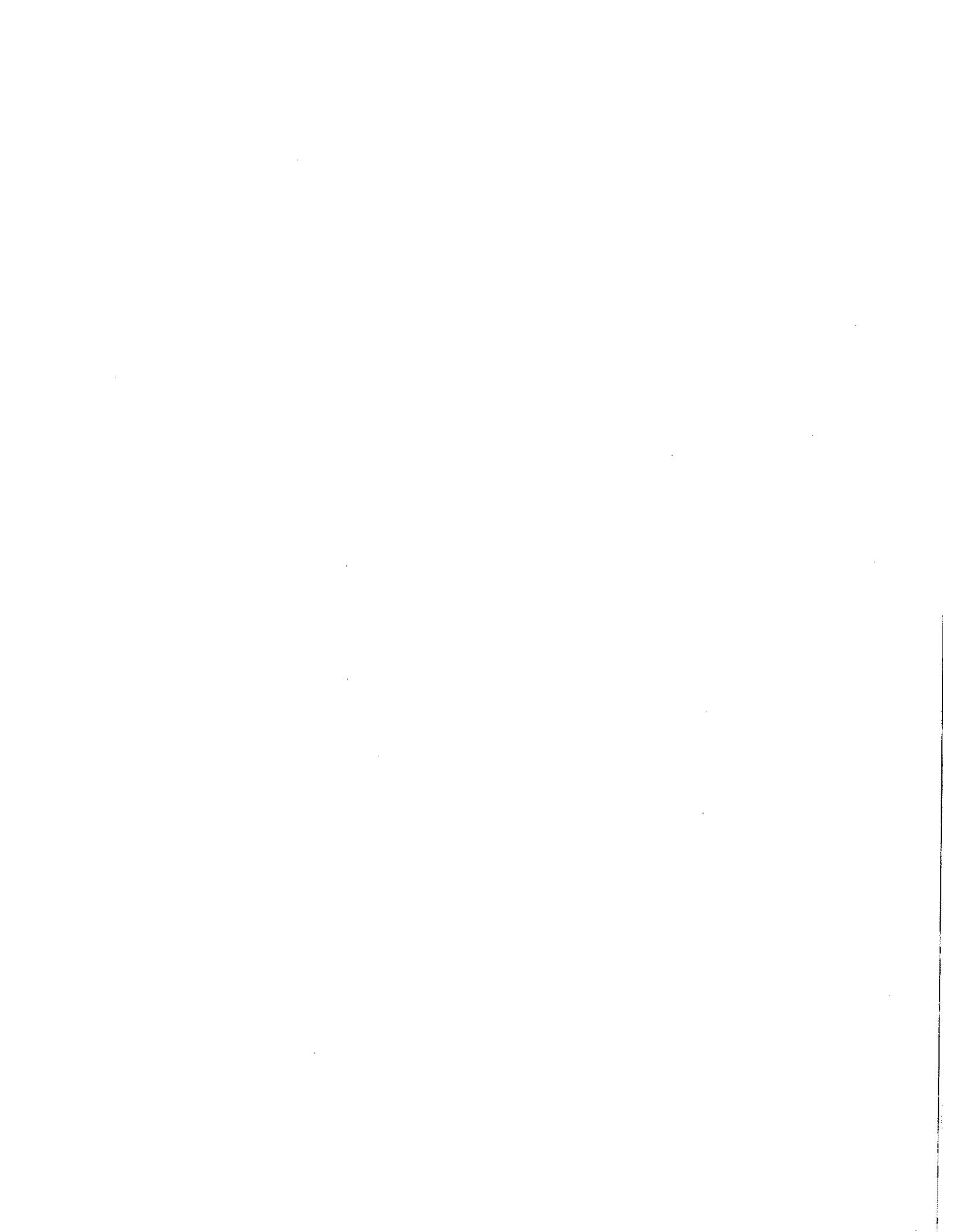
Unfortunately, the days of missing lunch money and other minor offenses among students are over. Across the country, we are seeing and hearing accounts of horrific incidents of violence in our schools. Raised House Bill No. 6489 will require the Department of Education to collect and track data regarding school based arrests. This information can be vital to the educational communities as they shape policy for student behavior and consequences. I strongly urge the committee to support this important proposal.

Statistics show that one in three teenagers has experienced violence in a dating relationship. Teen dating violence is often hidden because teenagers typically are inexperienced with dating relationships, want independence from their parents, are pressured by peers and have "romantic" views of love. Just as we educate our children about health and exercise, we must teach about healthy relationships and personal safety. Raised House Bill No. 6494 will provide teenagers with knowledge of teen dating violence and guidance for choosing healthy relationships.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate



Chairman Fleishman, (Chairman Gaffee) members of the education committee

I am here in support of Bill 945: An Act concerning World Language Requirements

I am sure that with the drafting of this new bill you have seen the research that supports the study of a foreign language.

The NEA research findings repeatedly show that the study of language improves higher order, abstract and creative thinking, helps students score higher on standardized tests, enhances career opportunities, promotes cultural awareness and competency, improves chances of college acceptance, achievement and attainment, and benefits understanding and security in our community and society as a whole.

Government studies document the need for proficient speakers of other languages as paramount to national security. Across the state the NEASC mission statements for accreditation of our school districts claim to prepare our students to become “responsible global citizens”.

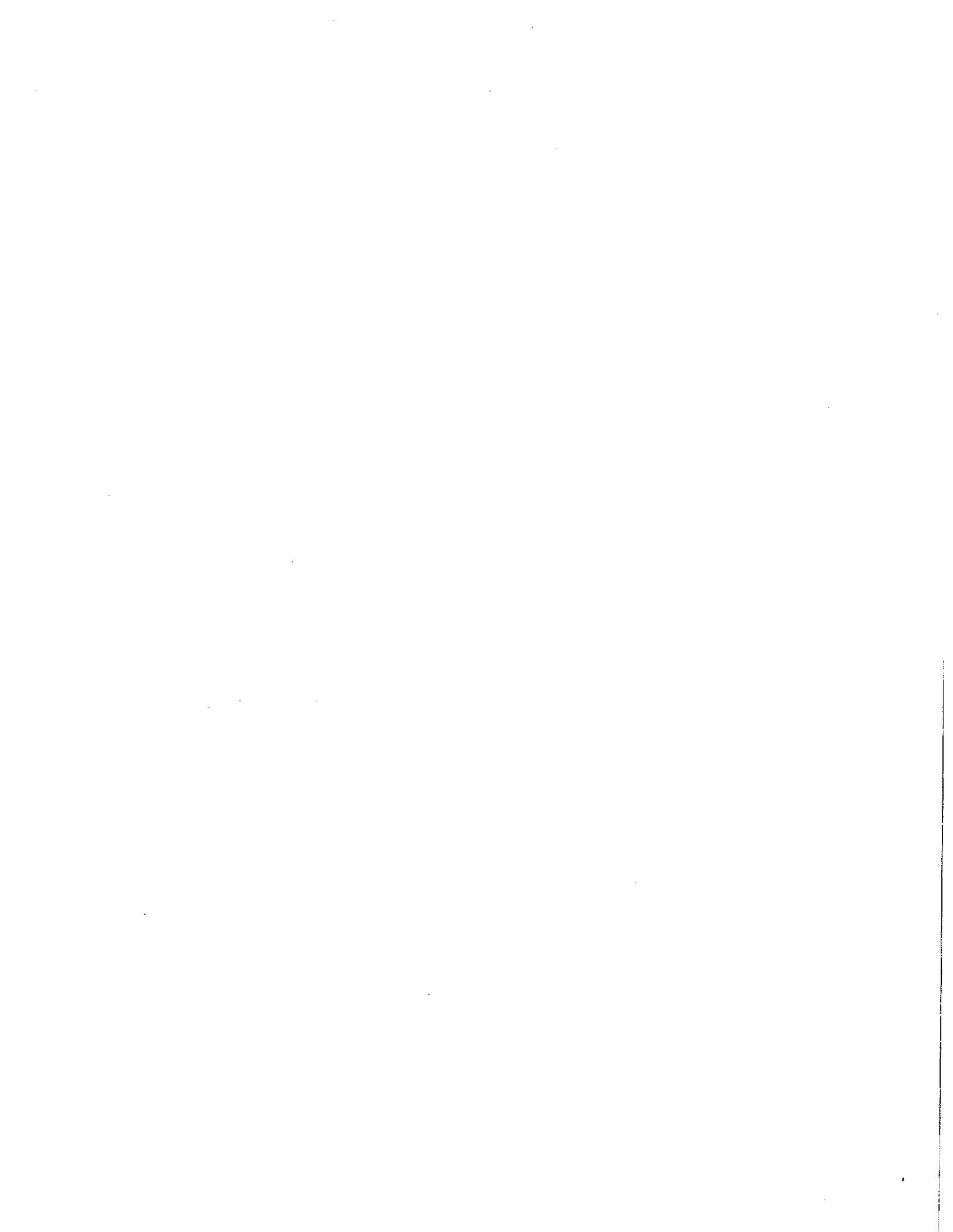
It is essential to pass this bill to include the study of a foreign language if we truly believe that we must prepare our future generation to actively participate competitively in this “flat world”, forever changed by technology. As Bernd Debusmann, a Reuters columnist states “**language is not only a means of communication, it is a window into the mind of other people and a key to their culture.**”

How will we ever have peace in this world, when we don’t require the study of another language and culture? The requirement to study language, while a minimum of two years, will not achieve proficiency, it is the beginning process to open the mind to new possibilities, new ways to look at the world. It is the possibility of using diplomacy to solve issues that they encounter.

To personalize this request, I celebrate a 34 year career of teaching foreign language –while emphasizing the importance of second language acquisition...with my own four children, at **Quirk Middle**, and **Weaver High** school here in Hartford for 19 years, in **Farmington**, for 8 years where I was part of the team to develop the proficiency test to be taken after the required two year of languages study in order to graduate. For the past 7 years I have been the dept chair for WL at **Enfield High** school, where I have developed an extensive exchange program with a school in Valladolid, Spain, all without the support of federal, state, and local monies.

The passion that I have for the study of language did not occur as an accident, but rather because of my study of French as a third grader in a pilot program started in South Windsor in the early 1960’s. It was my first introduction to viewing the world through another pair of glasses.

I believe that I have influenced a number of students to become language teachers . While this is important, I have also discovered through an impact study of our exchange program, our students



are continuing to study language beyond high school as they prepare to take their place in the market place, with the goal of becoming bilingual. Currently I can name 5 young students from Enfield alone, who will graduate from college with teaching degrees.

Your support of this bill is an investment in our future as our young people take their place in the global market. Please wholeheartedly support bill 945. Thank you.

Linda Levack Dalpe

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