

**Testimony in Support of HB 6666, Section 5
Adjunct Instructor Certificate**

March 16, 2009

Ann Grosso Arnold, parent of student
Educational Center for the Arts — ECA
55 Audubon Street
New Haven, CT 06510

Mr. Chairmen, Sen. Gaffey, Rep. Fleischman, and members of the Committee,

My name is Ann Grosso Arnold and I am a parent of a high school sophomore who attends Jonathan Law High School in Milford, in the morning, and the Educational Center for the Arts -- ECA -- in the afternoon. I write this to support the exceptionally excellent, indeed inspirational, professional artists, who are part time instructors at ECA, a **part-time** magnet high school. I urge you to vote favorably out of this Committee the provisions of section 5 of HB 6666, which would provide for an adjunct instructor certificate at a part-time magnet high school.

If this Committee should choose to vote out favorably any bill requiring certification, there must be a provision included in any such bill for part-time adjunct faculty in the visual arts, creative writing, music, dance, and theater, in **part-time** magnet schools, or else the unintended consequences of requiring certification for every teacher, even ECA adjunct instructors, who often teach as little as 6 hours and no more than 12 hours a week, would be to effectively close down and kill ECA.

First, I want to thank Rep. Paul Davis of your committee for attending our ECA Legislators' Forum which was held on Tuesday evening, March 10, 2009 conducted by our parent advocacy group, PACE, which stands for Parents for Arts Centered Education. At that time I asked Rep. Davis to be our point person on this Committee. In attendance were Senate Majority Leader Martin M. Looney, who indicated that he would speak to Sen. Gaffey, and members of this committee about our issues. Also in attendance were Reps. Toni Walker, Dick Roy, Cam Staples, and Barbara Lambert. Due to the incredibly busy legislative session, I do not know if each of you have had a chance to confer with Rep. Davis, Rep. Staples, or Sen. Majority Leader Looney, but I urge you to do so. They can summarize for you the discussions that were held regarding two legislative measures pending in this Committee, which threaten the existence of ECA. These measures are (1) the prohibition on the private pay option, contained in section 3 of RB 946, which we oppose, and (2) the requirement to authorize ECA faculty to obtain certification under an adjunct instructor certificate, contained in section 5 of HB 6666, which we support.

At our ECA Legislative Forum, we had more than 100 parents in attendance, standing room only, urging you to avoid undertaking legislative measures which would effectively end the 35 year life of ECA. Information about this forum can be found in the articles that are available the Committee.¹

I write to you, specifically, from the perspective of a parent of a theatre student and urge you to support HB 6666 with language modifications, so as to allow ECA teachers to remain at ECA, and not leave to seek additional teaching hours at the colleges and other places where they teach. We need HB 6666, section 5, to allow for our part-time adjunct instructors at our part-time high school program to continue to inspire our children not only as artists, musicians, dancers, writers and actors, but also as successful college students and citizens.

¹ <http://www.nhregister.com/articles/2009/03/11/news/doc49b795c67c381007523938.txt>
http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2009/03/eca_faces_crisi.php

Among the myths and misperceptions about ECA that I want to help dispel are (1) that ECA and the arts curriculum there are "supplemental" or "extra" benefits, which can expeditiously be cut without diminishing core curriculum values, lowering over-all student achievement or damaging students and their families; and (2) that ECA skills are not related to the job market. ECA inspires academic excellence in all subject areas. As to item (1), these students leave their home schools, having taken classes, tests, and so on all morning at noon; eat lunch on the bus if they have an opportunity, and arrive at ECA just prior to 1:00 pm. Their ECA classes are rigorous and require their complete attention and commitment. They receive the wisdom of professionals, all of whom have worked in their field with some of the greatest artists of all time, trained with some of the greats, and currently teach at the college level. Most of these artists also work in the field currently, as well! These teachers are highly trained, many of them possessing advanced degrees and certificates in their field. They have all spent many years honing their own craft and accumulating the wisdom of their peers. These are the special things they can share with the very fortunate high school students of ECA. They are very careful in the audition/application program to select only those students whose drive and commitment are clearly evident.

As to the second item, I also want to comment about the practical, real-life career and job market skills that ECA faculty impart to their students. Students are taught to arrive on time, be prepared, and to work collaboratively. These are the skills needed for future success either at college, or in a career. ECA students have to learn time management, as they have all the homework from their home high schools, and additional homework and practice related to two or three ECA classes. Students also give back to their community and learn leadership skills, such as forming an ensemble, marketing themselves, and making arrangements for concerts, gigs and other performances. ECA students have contributed to the commercial life of New Haven, playing for the Chapel Street merchants Association, the Broadway merchants, Audubon Street Arts Festival, and on the New Haven Green for the International Festival of Arts and Ideas.

Having real-time professional artist as teachers is an irreplaceable, unique element of the ECA teaching-learning experience, and I strongly urge this committee to avoid imposing a state mandate for certification which will have the effect of eliminating these talented professionals from teaching our children. These wonderful, dedicated instructors are committed to our young people and to giving them a unique opportunity to begin the in-depth study of their art while still in high school. There are numerous programs across the state wherein high school students take college level courses to enhance their education as early as possible, and ECA is one of these programs. It is a part-time program designed to complete the high school experience in a very special and precious way. I am not suggesting in any way that in a regular high school setting, instructors should be replaced by non-certified individuals; however, I believe that the unique situation created by ECA requires a unique interpretation of "highly qualified" professionals, encompassing all of their professional experience rather than focusing on something so arbitrary as certification to enter a regular classroom. I urge you to support HB 6666, section 5, and to implement a legislative authorization for an "adjunct instructor certificate" to allow our ECA faculty to continue to inspire our students at our part-time magnet school. I also urge everyone on your committee to consider visiting ECA during their afternoon class time, talking with teachers and students, and observing the high level of instruction and dedication you will find there.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann Grosso Arnold
ECA Parent