

Barbara O'Brien
183 Livingston Street
New Haven CT 06511

March 16, 2009

Education Committee
Hartford CT

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischman, and Committee Members:

I am the parent of a Wilbur Cross High School and Education Center for the Arts student. My 16 year-old daughter, Cleo O'Brien-Udry, has thrived at ECA for the past three years. ECA offers her an incredible opportunity to learn creative writing skills. She has grown as a writer, as a student, and as a person through her ECA education. Pairing the large environment at Cross, where she takes AP classes in Physics, Calculus, English Literature and Composition, and has already take AP Chemistry, with the small, intense, intimate ECA experience has been wonderful for her.

I write to you today to urge you to allow ECA continue its success. To do what they do, the ECA teachers do not need to be certified. I am adamantly opposed to this proposal because it would deprive ECA of its highly-specialized, extensively-trained core teachers—the professional artist/teachers recognized in their fields, who are responsible for our school's 35-year record of success, including a graduation rate significantly higher than the Connecticut average. Their training is the bedrock of the education that defines ECA. They have already incurred significant time and expense attaining their advanced degrees at the masters and Ph.D. levels, and are concurrently teaching at colleges like Wesleyan, Sarah Lawrence, and Yale. They would not be able to incur the additional time and expense required to become certified, even in the ARC program, and if required to do so (for part-time positions that offer no benefits), they would regrettably be forced to leave their jobs at ECA. Given that there would not be teachers available to hire who would be both certified and, simultaneously, practicing professional artists with college-teaching experience, as required to fulfill the mission of ECA, the end result of the Commissioner's proposal is that the school would close.

The Commissioner's present certification requirement would make it impossible to sustain a program that is inspiring our children to highly achieve and readying them for our competitive global economy, as well as fostering their admissions and scholarships to the best post-secondary conservatories and universities. We cannot afford for such a compromise in the education of our children to occur. I strongly urge you to support HB 6666, Section 5 and implement a legislative authorization for an "adjunct instructor certificate" to allow our ECA faculty to continue its excellent work. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Barbara O'Brien
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