

Friis, John

From: christopher.schuck@yale.edu
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2009 12:05 AM
To: Friis, John
Subject: Support for HB6666 Section 5 = Support for Part-Time Teachers atECA

My name is Christopher Schuck. I am 37 years old, and have resided in the New Haven area continuously since age 8. I have just received word that the existence of the Educational Center for the Arts, on Audubon Street in New Haven, is imminently threatened by the ramifications of the upcoming vote in the General Assembly regarding proposed changes to several policies. I am writing to express my shock, dismay and deep sadness at the prospect of this school's closing.

I will state up front that I never was myself a student at ECA, although I have know and am close with many people who did attend over the years. However, for the first five years that I lived in New Haven, I took piano lessons at the Neighborhood Music School. Subsequently, up until college, I played French horn in several of the orchestras and wind ensembles affiliated with the school. And, of course, I attended countless exhibitions, workshops, concerts, and other events that would not have been possible without the presence of ECA.

My mother worked for many years at the New Haven Arts Council across the street from ECA. Arguably, my musical development -- and ultimately, my connection to the local musical and artistic community -- can largely be attributed to these formative years spent on Audubon Street.

I am giving you all of this background only by way of saying that I represent only a tiny example of the positive impact this school and larger network has made, and continues to make, on the economic, cultural and civic life of New Haven. This neighborhood, and the organization that makes it what it is, represents a true oasis in New Haven that is not simply aesthetically pleasing, but fosters an openness, community, and intellectually stimulating yet accessible environment that is more and more difficult to find in cities today.

It is important to keep in mind that this set of decisions is not just about ECA; it is about the larger economic and cultural ramifications of effectively ensuring the demise of a school without which an entire neighborhood -- including many jobs -- would not exist. Just to take one example, the Koffee!

cafe on Audubon Street, which itself is an important locus for social and cultural life in the area and has probably indirectly stimulated the larger New Haven economy in ways that can't even be measured, would be rendered virtually irrelevant. But there are many other adjacent businesses -- both arts-related and non-arts-related -- which would be directly affected, and never regain their former vitality. And most importantly, New Haven youth would lose an indispensable source of hope, positive energy, and intellectual stimulation in an increasingly sterile world.

I don't want to take up any more of your time, so I will end the letter here.

But I hope that I have sufficiently emphasized how important I feel this school's survival is, not only to the individuals directly affected -- the teenagers and students, employees and residents -- but New Haven as a whole.

In fact, this outcome is arguably a microcosm of the kind of losses our country as a whole might have to endure over the next decade - if people like yourself don't help to stop this from happening as long as possible.

Much thanks, Chris Schuck