

**Friis, John**

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**From:** john bennett [johnboe47@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 15, 2009 9:28 AM  
**To:** Rep. Fleischmann, Andrew  
**Subject:** HB #6666

Dear Andy,

Although I live in Vernon, I have taught in WH for over 38 years. I remember you in high school, even though I taught at Talcott (remember?) Junior High School and at Sedgwick. I am a member of the Music Department (aka Dept of Fine and Performing Arts) and am a member of the West Hartford Symphony Orchestra (oboe and English horn). So, except for weekends and a few evenings per week, I really am a West Hartford "resident"!

I am writing to you about the House Bill #6666, section 5 that would allow non-certified Arts teachers to work at our Magnet and Charter schools here in Ct. I feel this is a disaster. From 1972-76 I taught at K-O as an instrumental music teacher, mainly because I did not have Ct certification. While working there, I returned to Hartt, got my education credits, and became certified. I then accepted a job at Talcott Jr. High, and then, when Talcott closed, Sedgwick. I loved all three schools, but the difference in the calibre of teaching between the independent school and the two public schools was monumental. At the charter/magnet/independent/parochial schools the prevailing attitudes could be summed up as "take the best and shoot the rest"; a little too graphic I know, but you get the idea. At our West Hartford Public Schools we have created a system that honors and teaches ALL children in all curricular areas. I will retire in a few years, knowing that my almost 40 years of teaching have been honored and respected by a wonderful town.

Part of West Hartford's appeal (other than BBSquare) has been the wonderful Art Music and Drama programs in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts.....Jack Alexander, Van Ftergiotis, and Haig Shahverdian were (are) wonderful talented leaders who have brought the students, teachers and townspeople a fantastic program of arts as part of a comprehensive education. Why let this heritage die? Allowing the arts to be delivered by titular "substitute teachers" ( folks who have a BS or BA, but no CT certification) would be a nightmare. Often (not in WH) the arts are relegated to "second class" status; math and english are the "real" courses. You and I know this is not true. Tons of research have shown us that the Arts are basic to a well rounded education.

History (remember, I have lived through a lot of it) records that there have been times when a shortage of teachers in a certain discipline necessitated a "relaxing" of certification rules. Immediately after WWII there was a great shortage; rules were waived, but with the understanding the prospective teachers would work towards getting their certification in a timely manner.

Currently, there is not a major shortage of certified Arts teachers; there is little or no need of waiving or negating the CT certification requirements. Therefore, HB 6666 should be defeated.

I do look forward to your thoughts and response.

Best wishes on your continued success

3/16/2009