

**Friis, John**

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**From:** matt kelsey [mkology@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 14, 2009 1:58 PM  
**To:** Friis, John  
**Cc:** eca\_pace@yahoo.com; mkology@gmail.com  
**Subject:** HB6666, Section 5

**Importance:** High

March 13th 2009

My name is Matthew Kelsey and I would like to add my experiences as an employee of ACES and the New Haven Public School system to the public hearing on Monday March 16th, regarding H.B. No. 6666. I could not attend in person, so I am directing my statement to John Friis, Clerk, Education Committee and forwarding it to Parents for Arts Centered Education (PACE).

I worked for three years as the Video Production Instructor at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School through a contract with ACES. Like the teachers at ECA I am not a certified teacher, and like them I worked as passionately to provide city and area students a rigorous and progressive education as most certified teachers do. Also like the teachers at ECA I was only able to work part time and with little pay and without any benefits. I was there because I loved doing it even though it came at an expense to me; the money I made being in the classroom was far lower than what would be expected working in my craft. Speaking for myself I can say I easily spent as many hours at BRAMS 'off the clock' as the ones I got paid for, and did so by my own choice because I wanted to do everything I could to support our program - which I really feel is an exceptional one - and for the kids - many of them desperately needed the special attention. I performed all of the usual jobs of a classroom teacher - including lesson plans, testing, curriculum planning, parent teacher conferences, coordinating with the social workers to help troubled students, and assisting students' independent study.

I took a few years off to pursue a personal project and have been giving serious thought to my plans for next year. I would love to come back to teach at BRAMS but I have serious doubts I would even be able to because of this proposal. There is no way I could afford to get my certification and keep food on the table for my 2 year with my income as a part time ACES employee, and to take on that hardship at cost to me without any real expectation of full time pay or benefits is inconceivable. I know for a fact that many other instructors involved with my former program have the same choice to make and most of them have so far decided to not continue with this line of work once this proposal goes into effect. Obviously people can always be replaced, but once this become state law, I imagine it would very difficult to find anyone willing to take these jobs. ECA is profoundly effected by this, but so do many other magnet schools. The list is long and there are plenty of people who can talk about these schools with more authority than can I, but from my close personal relationship with Betsy Ross, I can say I am extremely nervous that we are looking at the possible end of its arts program. And since it's an *arts magnet* school, that's a pretty big problem.

The goals of this proposal certainly seem to have good intentions, however I suspect it was authored without much attention paid to the intricacies of some our state's most progressive programs. The magnet school program in New Haven is one of the main reasons I relocated to the area from California to raise my family. I was familiar with this treasure as a born-and-raised resident of the area, and as a young father I wanted to come back here to make sure my daughter would access

to the well rounded education I enjoyed as a kid. It is deeply unsettling to me that it is now put at risk by this proposal. I would hope that with the time we have left we could find a compromise for folks like myself and all the fantastic teachers at ECA to be enforced by the state but in a way that respects the fact that many of us will never be 'real' full time teachers with the pay, benefits, and retirement possibilities they enjoy. I know there are many people who have been working in this program for many many years, who are now almost in a state of limbo. I would expect some recognition that spending 12 years in the classroom would certainly teach one how to be a pretty effective teacher - perhaps a pathway to certification that gives exceptions for classroom basics requirements according to years of experience could be a place to start.

Also - as a final point - if I were to take Connecticut's Formal Pathway to be a certified teacher as it stands today, I would have to get the Theatre Arts certificate to be a Video/Film Teacher. I have little interest in theatre arts personally and could mount an argument that Film/Video is as much a visual art as it is a theatrical one, but my point is that Connecticut is asking me to go back to school at my expense for a certification that doesn't fit so that I can have my old job back with zero expectation of having any of the good things that come with being a certified teacher, and is - let's be honest - probably only one or two budget cuts away from not existing anymore anyway. And this benefits whom exactly? The kids?

Please, please revise this bill.

I am sorry I could not attend the hearing in person, I would love to have the chancy to one day testify on this issue in person. For now please accept my written statement with the knowledge that I am worried sick over the outcome of this proposal.

best,  
Matthew Kelsey  
Branford, CT.  
teacher.