

Friis, John

From: R. A. Arnold [cleverredhead12@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2009 12:51 AM
To: Friis, John
Subject: Support for HB6666 Section 5 = Support for Part-Time Teachers at ACES Educational Center for the Arts

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to today to tell you of my extreme support for Section 5 of House Bill HB6666, a piece of legislation that is very dear to hearts of many in Connecticut. It will have a profound effect on the ACES Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven, a truly remarkable academic institution in the Audubon Arts district of New Haven that I currently attend. I am a student in the Theatre department, and the failure to pass this bill would have a severe impact on my school career.

This bill allows for my teachers, all of whom are working artists who have been teaching for decades, to remain teaching as they are now. If this bill were to fail, they would be forced to become certified, which would cause many to leave the school. This could cause the school to close, or worse, destroy the integrity of the school by forcing it to hire those who are not teaching artists, simply because they came with the right piece of paper. The course of studies that is offered at ECA far surpasses that at public high school, due solely to the fact that we have teaching artists available to us. I have had such experiences as taking college conservatory-level courses in my freshman and sophomore years there, as well as writing and mounting my own pieces, studying such techniques as the Stanislavsky system, Michael Chekhov approach, and Uta Hagen technique, and becoming a member of a community of deeply devoted and passionate artists, actors, and teachers. This is rare in any high school program, and certainly does not happen at my academic high school, where there is no class offered in theatre training, and the drama club is student run.

ECA is a part-time program. This means that, four days a week, from 7 to 12 every morning, I take my academic classes in English, math, science, and history at my "normal" high school, board a bus to New Haven, and from 1-4 study theatre in studios with highly trained artists. I never get home before 5, yet do so contently and happily because I am doing what I love with people who have experienced it firsthand. I could not imagine my high school career now without ECA, and that is because of my teachers. I have had the blessing to work very closely with one of them in particular. She is a dynamic woman, who understands acting technique and how to teach it, and has been doing so for 25 years. She has inspired me so much, that I now want to become a theatre teacher. I have never had this much respect and admiration for any teacher before, and consider her my mentor and friend. And, when certification first became an issue, she spent her money to go back to school to take the necessary courses in subjects like math to earn her certificate. Yet, let me tell you, my teacher did not need this. She had been shaping students for 20 years at ECA, many of whom have gone onto work in some of the best theatres in the country. This is not from what she learned in a classroom, but how she applied it in her professional career on the stage. I hope that I some day rise to her level of skill as an actor, and, more so, as a teacher. For she is a teacher who knows her craft and understands the ways to communicate it. No certificate need substantiate this. She is the teacher she is because of the artist she is.

ECA has been operating since 1973, having been founded on the principle of the teaching artist. Take this away, and the school is no more. As you can see by this, and the no doubt countless other letters you have received from my fellow passionate classmates, the students are completely in love with it, because it gives us the greatest sense of fulfillment that we have ever experienced, and provides us with an extraordinarily high level of training. This bill affirms that, and simply needs to

pass. You have heard the love for it in the letters you have received from students, parents, alumni, and teachers. You will hear more of it when this issue is in a public forum. It is truly a school like no other, a community of artists, a network of friends, a true family. This bill is vital to its survival. Look at the possible outcomes. Without this bill, ECA will either close, or be forced to hire those who are not as qualified and not teaching artists. Yet, with this bill, ECA will continue to thrive, training future students in the art they love and the skills they need to make our society beautiful, thoughtful, and cultural. For that is the biggest thought we all must face: what of the future students? The ones who are destined to be artists? Do we dare take this opportunity away?

Please, support Section 5 of House Bill HB6666, and support the countless lives ECA touches.

In all sincerity,

Raymond A. Arnold
ECA- Theatre Dept. '11

Raymond A. Arnold

"We must overcome the notion that we must be regular...
it robs you of the chance to be extraordinary
and leads you to the mediocre"
-Uta Hagen