

Friis, John

From: Sally O'Brien [sally.oh.brien@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 14, 2009 8:48 PM
To: Friis, John
Cc: eca_pace@yahoo.com; fobbio@optonline.net
Subject: HB6666, Section 5

Dear Mr. Friis,

My name is Sally O'Brien and I am writing in opposition to two proposals being considered by the General Assembly: the one that will prohibit parents for paying tuition at any magnet school, and the one that will require all teachers, part-time or full-time, to get state certification. I oppose these two proposals because I believe that they place the future of ECA (Educational Center for the Arts) in serious jeopardy.

I grew up in Orange, CT and attended public schools my entire life, graduating from Amity High in 2003. My junior year of high school, I was accepted by ECA, and was a student in the theater department there my junior and senior years. Amity is one of several school districts that does not cover any portion of its students' tuition for ECA, so my parents ended up paying the portion of tuition not covered by the state. If they were prohibited from doing so, I would not have been able to attend. I know for a fact that without ECA, my high school years would have been miserable. Furthermore, cities and towns are cutting budgets left and right these days, and arts education tends to be one of the first things to go when times are tight. It is ridiculous to assume that school districts like Amity will decide to pay to send students to ECA now, when they have refused in the past. If parents are willing to pay, why would the state want to prevent them from doing so?

The teachers I had at ECA are some of the best I have had in my life; the arts instruction I received there was ten times better than anything I might have gotten at Amity. The reason the teachers are so good is that their main careers are as artists; they teach at ECA because they want to, not because they make a lot of money doing it. They pass along that passion to their students. If they are forced to get certification for teaching part-time at ECA, most of them will decide that it is not worth the trouble or the expense, and will leave. By requiring ECA teachers to get certified, the state will be doing irreparable harm to ECA as an institution, and to the students of greater New Haven. This is inexcusable.

I urge you to oppose these two pieces of legislation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Sally O'Brien