

**Testimony in Support of HB 6666, Section 5
Adjunct Instructor Certificate**

March 16, 2009

Steven Strom, parent of student
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55 Audubon Street
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Mr. Chairmen, Sen. Gaffey, Rep. Fleischman, and members of the Committee,

My name is Steven Strom and I am a parent of a high school junior who attends Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven, in the morning, and the Educational Center for the Arts -- ECA -- in the afternoon. I stand before you to support the exceptionally excellent, indeed inspirational, professional artists, who are part time instructors at ECA, a part-time magnet high school. I urge you to vote favorably out of this Committee the provisions of section 5 of HB 6666, which would provide for an adjunct instructor certificate at a part-time magnet high school.

If this Committee should choose to vote out favorably any bill requiring certification, there must be a provision included in any such bill for part-time adjunct faculty in the visual arts, creative writing, music, dance, and theater, in part-time magnet schools, or else the unintended consequences of requiring certification for every teacher, even ECA adjunct instructors, who may teach as little as 6 hours and no more than 12 hours a week, would be to effectively close down and kill ECA.

First, I want to thank Rep. Paul Davis for attending our ECA Legislators' Forum which was held on Tuesday evening, March 10, 2009. I was a moderator for that meeting for our parent advocacy group, PACE, which stands for Parents for Arts Centered Education. At that time I asked Rep. Davis to be our point person on this Committee. In attendance were Senate Majority Leader Martin M. Looney, who indicated that he would speak to Sen. Gaffey, and members of this committee about our issues. Also in attendance were Reps. Toni Walker, Dick Roy, Cam Staples, and Barbara Lambert. Due to the incredibly busy legislative session, I do not know if each of you have had a chance to confer with Rep. Davis, Rep. Staples, or Sen. Majority Leader Looney, but I urge you to do so. They can summarize for you the discussions which were held regarding two legislative measures pending in this Committee, which threaten the existence of ECA. These measures are (1) the prohibition on the private pay option, contained in section 3 of RB 946, which we oppose, and (2) the requirement to authorize ECA faculty to obtain certification under an adjunct instructor certificate, contained in section 5 of HB 6666, which we support.

At our ECA Legislative Forum, we had more than 100 parents in attendance, standing room only, urging you to avoid undertaking legislative measures which would effectively end the 35 year life of ECA. Information about this forum can be found in the articles which are available the Committee.¹

I speak to you, specifically, from the perspective of a parent of a music student and urge you to support HB 6666 with language modifications, so as to allow ECA teachers to remain at ECA, and not leave to seek additional teaching hours at the colleges and other places where they teach. We need HB 6666, section 5, to allow for our part-time adjunct instructors to continue to inspire our children not only as artists, musicians, dancers, writers and actors, but also as successful college students and citizens.

Among the myths and misperceptions about ECA that I wish to help dispel are (1) that ECA and the arts curriculum there are "supplemental" or "extra" benefits, which can expeditiously be cut without diminishing core curriculum values, lowering over-all student achievement or damaging students and their families, and (2) that ECA skills are not related to the job market. As to the first notion, let me discuss academics at ECA. My son takes music theory and composition on Mondays and Wednesdays, and has small and large ensembles on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Classes at ECA run from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. The textbook used for music theory is the same text as is used at the University of Hartford, Hartt School of Music, and the curriculum covers not only all the state required core curriculum standards and objectives for music, but is on the level of the Hartt School of Music and the Yale School of Music. My son's studies of music theory have dramatically increased his interest in math and other subjects, and he has, on his own, gotten a physics book so he can understand and study sound waves and how various styles of music, different musical instruments emit unique wave patterns and how those patterns are received in the ear. His interest in psychology has also been stimulated, and he is presently taking an Advanced Placement (AP) class in psychology at Wilbur Cross High School. One of the books he has recently read is "This is Your Brain on Music." Thus, he will be taking two AP exams this May, AP Music Theory (which is not even taught at the high school) and AP Psychology. ECA inspires academic excellence in all subject areas.

I have to talk to you about my son's instructors, and how critical it is for you to pass an adjunct instructor certificate, such as is contained in HB 6666, section 5. Two of my son's teachers are at present Ph.D. candidates, finishing their doctorates at the Yale School of Music. One of them, Tawnie Olson, is giving her doctoral dissertation, a premiere concert performance of her work by the Yale Camerata, on Sunday April 5, 2009, and all the ECA students are invited to attend this free concert. Music composition students from ECA have consistently won composition prizes at statewide music competitions sponsored by the

¹ <http://www.nhregister.com/articles/2009/03/11/news/doc49b795c67c381007523938.txt>
http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2009/03/eca_faces_crisi.php

Connecticut Music Educators' Association (CMEA). I am advised by Judy Caldwell, the Department Chair for the Music Department at ECA, that 6 of the 15 statewide CMEA prizes for music composition (40%) were awarded this year to ECA music students. The other Yale School of Music doctoral student who teaches my son, Oliver Holmann, stepped in for Eddie Alex, to coach the saxophone quartet. One of the pieces that he gave to the students was a classical composition from the late 1500's arranged for saxophones. It was amazing for me to listen at the winter small ensemble concert and learn as a parent that there were such pieces written so long ago arranged for a saxophone quartet, juxtaposed to a Duke Ellington composition. ECA students are also learning about music history. The ECA arts curriculum is not "extra" or "supplemental" but rather directly impacts core subject matter areas and is integrated with all subjects.

I need to also express my deepest gratitude to Jeff Fuller, who is presently my son's composition teacher and his musical director in both the large jazz ensemble and the micro-jazz ensemble. Jeff Fuller,² is a practicing, performing bassist, who has a regular gig Friday evenings at a New Haven restaurant, playing jazz bass. He is an accomplished composer, and the large jazz ensemble is presently rehearsing his Latin jazz composition "Salsa en mi Alma," which will be performed at the ECA spring concert. As the large ensemble conductor, and consistent with the focus on core curriculum values, e.g. reading, writing, ECA's music students are required to submit in writing, concert reviews, four times each school year, one for each marking period. This requires each student to select a concert and write a detailed, well organized critique of the performance. These concert reviews are carefully graded. The ECA teachers do not merely give letter grades, but in addition to a letter grade, write carefully detailed, individual narrative comments, which constructively motivate each student. The amount of time outside of the class dedicated to this grading and commenting process is enormous, and is greatly appreciated by both the students and the parents.

As I mentioned earlier, Eddie Alex, had to take a leave of absence in November 2008 due to his going on tour with Reuben Stoddard, former American Idol star, who is a touring professional musician himself. Eddie Alex is now back at ECA, and is sharing with students directly from his first hand knowledge and experience, what it is like to be on tour as a professional musician, from both the musical performance perspective, as well as teaching ECA students the practical and business aspects of the job. Another of my son's ECA teachers is Roy Wiseman, a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) who has taught at ECA for more than twenty years, and also teaches at Wesleyan. He is, like all the ECA music faculty, eminently qualified, but lacks "standard certification." He like a other ECA instructors could not continue at ECA if an "adjunct part-time instructor certificate" is not authorized by legislation. He would simply teach another class

² Jeff Fuller, BA cum laude Yale College, MMus Yale School of Music. For more information about Jeff Fuller go to <http://www.jefffuller.net/>

at Wesleyan to make up for any potential lost income. We as parents do not want to lose these teachers. Losing these teachers would be the death penalty for ECA and would terminate our school. The members of this committee should support HB6666, section 5.

I also wish to comment about the practical, real-life career and job market skills which ECA faculty impart to their students. Each classroom has a sign on the door "On Time, In Tune." Students are taught to arrive on time, with their music and instruments, be prepared and to work collaboratively. These are the skills needed for future success either at college, or in a career. ECA students have to learn time management, as they have all the homework from their sender high schools, and additional homework and practice related to two or three ECA classes. Students also give back to their community and learn leadership skills, such as forming a music ensemble, marketing themselves, making arrangements for concerts, gigs and other performances. ECA students have contributed to the commercial life of New Haven, playing for the Chapel Street merchants Association, the Broadway merchants, Audubon Street Arts Festival, and on the New Haven Green for the International Festival of Arts and Ideas. In some of these performances they play side by side with some of their instructors, such as Eddie Alex, Roy Wiseman and Jeff Fuller. Students learn real-life lessons and job skills from these active practitioners of their arts.

Having real-time professional musicians as teachers is an irreplaceable, unique element of the ECA teaching-learning experience, and I strongly urge this committee to avoid imposing a state mandate for certification which will have the effect of eliminating these talented professionals from teaching our children. I urge you to support HB 6666, section 5, and to implement a legislative authorization for an "adjunct instructor certificate" to allow our ECA faculty to continue to inspire our students at part-time magnet schools.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steven Strom
ECA Parent