

Friis, John

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March 9 ,2009

Senator Gaffey
Representative Fleischmann
Members of the Education Committee
In reference to the Governor's Bill 830 and SB259

The Connecticut Parent Teacher Association represents over 52,000 citizens of Connecticut who are deeply concerned about the future of children and families in our state and who recognize that the very future of that state depends upon those children. We know that in these difficult economic times difficult decisions have to be made by all, but we are very concerned about one of those proposed decisions in the Governor's budget recommendations. That is the lowering of the per meal reimbursement for those schools that certify as healthy schools from 10 cents per meal to 5 cents. In this economy when families are stretched even more to make ends meet and the cost of food is not decreasing, many children depend on their school meals to help fully meet their nutritional needs. To cut the funding for schools that are doing the right thing by trying to make the food available to students as healthy as possible does a great disservice to our children. 101 school districts participate in this program now. A loss of funds could see a decrease in that number to the detriment of our children.

Additionally, the Connecticut Parent Teacher Association strongly supports SB259 - An Act Concerning Members of Local Boards of Education. Connecticut is one of the few states in the nation that still has partisan boards of education. Currently if a municipality decided that they wanted to change their charter to allow for a nonpartisan selection process for their board of education, state statute prevents them from doing so.

The focus of Boards of Education should be the improvement of educational quality and facilities for all the children in their district. The individuals tasked with executing this charge should be the best qualified in their district with a commitment to education first and foremost. In some districts this is exactly who serves on the Board of Education and all members work together for the betterment of the students. In some other districts, however, decisions are made based on a political party caucus or candidates are selected based on their party loyalty and not their qualifications to serve the students. Removing the partisanship from the Board would put the emphasis back where it belonged – on the children. This bill does not mandate that our communities change the way they currently select their Boards of Education – it simply would allow those who wish to make a change the ability to do so. Isn't that the epitome of local control?

Thank you.

Melissa Johnson
President, Connecticut Parent Teacher Association