

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee:

I would like to first apologize for my absence. I hope that my absence is not viewed as my level of interest in the matter at hand. As I would have wanted nothing more than to be there in person, but I am faced with competing priorities and this time the one that provides for my family came out victorious. Ironically, my misfortune is a perfect example of a con to incorporating the Choice program into the board of education. Before choice, there was project concern and project concern in essence was created to address a specific need that was not being addressed by the Hartford board of education. Not because they didn't want to, not because they didn't care but because it was not their primary job. Integrating minority inner-city children into suburban towns was a special project, that required a lot of attention, focus, planning, perseverance and nurturing, that the board of education could not provide. So, project concern was founded. It became the full-time responsibility of the folks within the project concern organization to execute the plan of integration. These folks were expected to meet all the needs of the families and school districts participating in the program. And let me tell you each family and school district's needs were very different and required different levels of staff involvement all of which were able to be met because it was someone's full-time job to do so. Like the staff back when it was project concern the staff at project choice is having to accommodate the needs of all the current participant in the choice program. Which has grown since it was first founded. While the needs may not be exact they are still similar and unique. We have come a long way from the first school bus carrying minority children to an all white school, but we still have a long way to go.

It is my belief that progression would be stagnant and impaired if Project Choice became an additional responsibility for someone already carrying a full work-load. Additionally, its my belief that the learning curve to understanding and pro actively addressing the needs of the participants in the program is substantial. We already have a staff that is dedicated and invested in the goals and initiatives of this program. As a parent I am comfortable and confident in the abilities of the current staff members to address any issues on may behalf that may arise. And as a parent words can't explain how much I value this. I am making the decision every day to send my children out into an environment that is very different from their own and as an alumni of the program I know first hand what that feels like. So, to have folks on hand that are going to advocate and ensure that the playing field remains as leveled as possible provides me with great comfort in continuing in the program. The folks at project choice are not just ensuring that we receive just treatment they are a central point for the participating districts.. The districts participating in the program wants to trust that there will be a main contact that is focusing on addressing their needs and to be honest I am not sure how we can promise that with the proposal that's on the table. Quite frankly if this proposal is passed the participants both families and districts will be negatively impacted. Because the folks gaining the responsibility will often be faced with the same circumstance that I was faced with this today. Competing priorities, you have to make a choice and something is going to get left behind and put off for another day. Normally this is fine and I am sure that the current staff members at project choice are making similar choices today the difference is they will get another chance as this is their primary responsibility. They won't miss the sensitive issues because of their experience and knowledge. This won't

be the case if this program is rolled into the board of education. The probability of things being missed and going unaddressed will increase under the current proposal. Under the current plan someone is liable not to show up when it counts because they were faced with competing priorities.

Thank You,

Tameka