

Good morning Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Amy Nocton and I am here today as a World Language Department Coordinator, a classroom teacher, a member of the Connecticut Organization of Language Teachers, and as a parent of two young bilingual children. I am against proposed Bill 944.

Although I understand the desire to improve student performance in the areas of math and science, and to increase the number of credits required for high school graduation in those two areas as well as others, I am distressed to think about at what expense these additions will occur. In the original high school reform document, the language repeatedly states that Connecticut needs to insure that its students are prepared for a globally interconnected world. While producing more globally competitive students in other fields, what gains are to be made if our students can't communicate effectively with people in other languages?

In the district where I teach, world language is considered a non-core subject area. This often translates to non-essential. Several years ago following the construction of a new building, the world language program in my regional district was greatly reduced. The argument was in part that such a cut was necessary to offset the cost of the new building. However, that same year, the Board of Ed implemented both football and volleyball programs.

Early this fall, I was called into the main office to meet with the middle and high school principals and the district superintendent. I was told that because of the language in the high school reform bill calling for a two year language requirement for graduation,

the administration was planning ways to implement this new two credit requirement, and that this meant that the world language program would not only be restored to its previous size and scope, but it would be significantly increased. My department members and I were elated.

However, shortly thereafter the economy began to collapse, and with the subsequent removal of the world language graduation requirement from the high school reform document, we were told these plans for program restoration and expansion would be put on hold. It wasn't a surprise.

This past Thursday night, I was informed that further cuts would be made to my department. We are losing a full time position, this at a time when enrollments are increasing at the high school. As a result, there will be many students blocked out of language courses next year, making them unable to take the third year of language study that so many universities want to see for consideration for college acceptance. If lucky, these students might be able to compete for a third class their senior year. If lucky.

Increasing credit requirements in other content areas, particularly lab sciences, also will further prevent students from pursuing language study in their junior and senior years. Already I have the following scheduling conflicts with science labs: Mondays I lose six students from my Italian I class, Tuesdays I lose an additional two students from the same class, Wednesdays I lose three students from Spanish IV honors, and Thursdays I lose two more students from the same class. I also lose one student from the UConn Early College Experience Spanish V class every Wednesday. The only day I see all of my students in every class is Friday. Last year I had one student who is interested in a career in medicine and who wanted to continue studying Spanish because she recognizes

that strong Spanish skills will enhance this career choice, but she had to miss Italian once a week and Spanish IV twice a week due to lab conflicts. Such conflicts shouldn't be happening, and shouldn't always be at the expense of world language courses. No other content area is asked to release students for labs. This situation will worsen if Bill 944 is passed and no requirement for world language credits is added.

I urge you not to pass proposed Bill 944. It is my hope that either bill 945 be passed or that the State Commissioner and his committee scrap the current proposal for high school reform and instead create a bill that includes world language study as an essential component of a rigorous plan that provides students with the tools to be successful in all realms of this increasingly global society.

Thank you.

\*the elimination of world language contradicts the explicit intent and language of the original and existing bill

\*the elimination of the world language requirement compounds existing prejudices against world language study as less important than math, science, other humanities, and even athletics

\*world language is always the first content area sacrificed during times of financial hardship

\*world language study is essential for college acceptance and for economic and social success and well being