

**World Affairs Council
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**Connecticut General Assembly
Education Committee
Testimony re: S.B. 945 *An Act Concerning World
Language Requirements*
February 23, 2009**

My name is John Meyers and I have served as the Project Director – Educational Programs for the World Affairs Council of Connecticut since 2007. I have been involved in international education in various capacities over the past 15 years including service as a member of the United States delegation to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Human Resource Development Working Group; Managing Editor of the *Journal of Studies in International Education*; and on various boards and advisory committees related to international education. In my present position, I also represent the World Affairs Council on the School Design teams for the Hartford Public Schools: Asian Studies Academy and the Academy for Latino Studies.

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For the past 85 years, the mission of the World Affairs Council has been to inform the public on issues related to international politics, economy, business, and culture. It achieves its mission through public programs and educational programs.

Specific to the consideration of S.B. 945 *An Act Concerning World Language Requirements*, the Council convened policy makers, business executives, and educational leaders at a Roundtable on Connecticut's International Readiness in this building on February 6. It was clear from these conversations that in addition to being "shovel ready" that the State also needs to be "global ready".

The Hartford Courant's editorial on February 21 (attached, see also: <http://www.courant.com/news/opinion/editorials/hc-international.art.artfeb21,0,4746608,print.story>)

highlighted the increase in Connecticut's exports and consideration of foreign language study in Connecticut's high schools. I would like to add that new data released last week indicates that exports exceeded \$15 billion in 2008, a 57% increase since 2005.

When we look at the 57% increase in exports, we know that this is not sustainable in the current economic climate. But, what we do

know that it is a global economic downturn, one that will eventually turn into a global economic recovery. Yes, a global recovery.

The World Affairs Council is committed to international education as a way to prepare the future workforce to be “global ready.” A part of this effort includes world languages.

Why is this important: so that the 4600 Connecticut exporting businesses, a vast majority of which are small- and medium-sized enterprises, are able to employ staff who have a world view. The advantage is also to those who currently do not export or provide services to international visitors and businesses who will be prompted and motivated by Connecticut’s globally-oriented, internationally-minded, and linguistically capable.

We don’t anticipate fluency from students fulfilling a two-year requirement, but we do expect facility in a second language, the capacity to pursue international connections, the ability to work across cultures, and to use with some degree of comfort google.fr; google.de, google.cn.

The focus on STEM is welcome, but it should be STEM – International or GLOBAL STEM. These attributes will make

Connecticut more competitive, help it to attract foreign business and maintain and grow a dynamic workforce.

The times are tough. The economy down. But, still, investments in our human capital need to be made. We live in a global age, we need to invest in our global capacity.

Down the road, when we reflect on how Connecticut was able to succeed in a global recovery...we hope to be able to point to the decision by this committee to recommend the foreign language requirement. The World Affairs Council supports S.B. 945 and welcomes your consideration.

Thank you.

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