

My Public Hearing Testimony

Richard de Meij – richard@celebratelanguages.com

Thank you for the opportunity to share my statement. My name is Richard de Meij, and I appear here today to passionately urge you to support and pass S.B. No. 945 and to recognize the urgency of foreign language education in today's global economic climate, by reinstating the World Languages requirement for high school graduation.

I am a speech-pathologist, a linguist, a board member of the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers, and a fluent speaker of eight (8) world languages, and founder of www.celebratelanguages.com, an online language and culture educational resource for teachers, students, parents and policy makers. Having graduated from an exceptional educational system, that wisely included and valued the importance and urgency of a multicultural and *multilingual* education, I have, and am still, experiencing firsthand the **POWER**, the joys, the value, the benefits and the floodgates of opportunities made possible by being able to fluently speak *more than just one language*.

Today I speak to you as a private resident of the State of Connecticut, and of the city of Hartford, and most importantly, as a linguistically and culturally skilled citizen of the 21st century global world. I am also a passionate teacher of World Languages at Hartford Public High School, and for the CCAVS which is a private, accredited, online virtual middle/high school, where I have the opportunity to teach Spanish, distantly and daily, through the "magic" of present-day educational cyber-technology.

Linguistic and cultural competence will be the mark of the well-educated and globally-aware citizen of the 21st century. While ALL other western industrialized countries ARE providing their students with multicultural and *language* skills to meet the challenges of the inescapable reality of our present globalized world, our state (and nation) cannot afford to sit idly and stubbornly by, allowing our future citizenry to wallow in the limitations of a monolingual/mono-cultural educational system, lest we be intentionally guilty of depriving our students of developing 21st century-compliant skills. Indeed choosing not to provide our students with a world-class, global education including an early start and long sequence of foreign language study, really amounts to nothing less than *systematic* and *deliberate educational* and

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