

Testimony from Chris Campbell
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Senator Daily, Representative Staples, members of the Finance Committee, My name is Chris Campbell of Palace Production Center, Praxis Media, Young American Heroes and Rabbit Ears Entertainment and I am here to testify on Senate Bill 933 – and more specifically, Section 7 dealing with the Film and Digital Media Incentive Program.

Before I begin, I would first of all like to thank the members of this committee and indeed all of the members of the legislature for serving in this very difficult time. It cannot be a lot of fun trying to balance all of the needs of your constituents in this economic climate. And I thank you.

In the next few minutes I would like to make several important points about balance.

First, I am a producer and that is a job that for all intents and purposes is nothing BUT balancing the very real and often conflicting needs of investors, artists, bankers and of course, most importantly, your audience. If we

are lucky, we get to take our own interests into consideration once in a while but that is a bonus. I have been in the media production industry my whole life. I have worked for some of the largest institutions in the world and for some of the smallest. I came to Conn. for college in the 1970's and have been here ever since. During most of the last 30 years I have been a leading independent producer, my companies involved in creating in excess of \$250 Million in productions all over the world.

During that time, BALANCE has been the key to our survival and our success. Because the media business is not just about lights, camera action, it's mainly about people. And during the same time that we have been creating shows for entertainment, institutions and education, we have also had the privilege to see what start up media companies and the people they attract do for the community they exist in. When we first opened in South Norwalk, it was a bombed out shell of an inner city. I would think twice about walking down the street after dark- and I'm from North Jersey! Now it is a tourist Mecca of shops and restaurants and a thriving downtown area. Was it just media businesses that made the difference? Of course not – but there was a time

when the only real businesses were the media start ups on all of the second floors of the building and a few restaurants to feed them. What made it work was an enlightened policy of the city of Norwalk to spur the redevelopment and the people with the drive to make it work.

Because you see, it is that balance that we need now. Media production is one of the most naked examples of capitalism. With money, drive and plain old chops, anyone who can scrape up the money and who is driven to succeed can walk away with the prize – just look at last night's Academy award winners – talk about grit.... I can see the pitch now – “let's make a film about a quiz show set in an Indian slum.....”hmmm...oh yeah, let's have some musical dancing numbers, too....” That gets you thrown out of offices...

My point is that the legislature had the foresight to enact the tax credit program to create an industry that is far and away a runaway success. I do not pretend to be an economist but the overall economic impact of media production is transformational. Just look at South Norwalk and imagine it happening in Bridgeport, Hartford and other cities around the state. Its not just the

multiplier of the business which is one of the highest of any sector but the accelerator in the economy also— it is truly enormous —acting together to combine to as much as 10 to 12 times the tax credit themselves – but it also the momentum that we must take into consideration. ...I do not believe that anything else works as FAST and is as sustainable to impact a community...and in this environment- that is of key importance.

I speak now as someone who has been doing this for a lot of years. And I speak also as someone who is both a long time citizen, a parent of school age children AND as an educator – I have a doctorate in education for Columbia University in NYC- the choice between media tax credits and education is a FALSE one. Media and technology are the future of educational improvement –and giving teachers and students the tools to learn is one of the things that this program has created – to use a small personal example – look at Young American Heroes.

The media Tax credit program is essential to the business. If the legislature revokes or makes it unusable, the state will not get more revenue –

the business will simply evaporate. Until a program like this takes root over several years, the industry remains portable and can move anywhere. I am as committed to Conn. as anyone else but I cannot emphasize strongly enough that we are vulnerable to the draw of other states programs... and none of us can afford that. We need to keep our balance in this critical time- and to make sure that what we are measuring to balance are the correct elements – measuring these tax credits against increased revenue as a zero sum game (less for media = more for education) is simply false. We need to build our economic base to generate tax revenue, not gut it.

As I started out saying – thank you for your time dedication and effort in serving the state...

And Thank you for your time.