

March 4 2009

Transportation Committee

Room 2300, Legislative Office Building

Hartford, CT 06106

Testimony in Support of SB 204

Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

Thank you taking the time to consider SB 204, an act proposed to provide reduced fares for postsecondary and vocational studies students who travel via Connecticut Transit System buses.

To begin, I am a student attending Gateway Community College's Long Wharf campus. Since the Fall, 2008 semester, I have been commuting to school via CT Transit buses for the following reasons: it is economical (especially when gasoline was \$4.00 a gallon), it is relatively convenient, and to avoid traffic and the Long Wharf campus' crowded parking conditions. Many students around the State use CT Transit buses to travel to public and private colleges and universities for similar reasons, or due to the fact that they do not have access to a car.

The cost to obtain a higher education is constantly on the rise. Any way that a student can reduce the costs associated with college are helpful in aiding that student to achieve their goal of earning a degree. As we all know, a person with a college education is a citizen who is better prepared to handle the challenges that the world presents to us all, but also is a person who has the ability to earn a higher income, which is beneficial to the economy and the tax base.

One benefit of reducing bus fares is to provide an incentive for those students who currently use private vehicles to travel to school. It is common knowledge that traffic in the area of Gateways' Long Wharf campus is fairly heavy much of the time, particularly during the peak commuting hours in the morning and evening. Generally speaking, we as a society should be reducing fossil fuel usage by decreasing the number of cars on the road, which is of benefit to us all.

I write to you in support of SB 204 and ask that you vote in favor of this bill. Passage of SB 204 will help cash strapped college and vocational studies students monetarily, and will provide an incentive for those students who currently drive their own vehicles to school to switch to public transportation. Currently, the fare for students under 18 years of age is \$1.00. This is not available to most college and vocational studies students. A discount of 50% on bus fare would be reasonable, it is sizeable enough to positively impact a student's wallet, and it is similar to that currently afforded to senior citizens and the disabled. As a further convenience, bus passes could be sold directly through college bookstores or business offices. I recognize that there are financial considerations in reducing bus fares, especially in the current economic crisis. However, as a long term, environmentally friendly and socially responsible policy, this student discount would provide savings in other areas that are actually more expensive to State and local governments. The more cars that are on the roads, the greater the chance for accidents to occur between vehicles. Consider the costs and relative dangers associated with rolling police and emergency personnel to respond to traffic issues. Furthermore, road surface wear and tear is reduced by decreasing

the number of vehicles that use the roadways. Fewer automobiles on the road also translates into better air quality.

The final point I would like to make is that this policy is student friendly, too. If we value higher education, we need to demonstrate it by giving students a concrete example of our favorable opinion and support by showing them that what they are striving for is of value to society as a whole. A discount on bus fare is a very reasonable way to make this statement.

Thank you for reading my testimony. I look forward to your decision on SB 204.

Sincerely,
Gary George

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