

TESTIMONY in support of S. B. No. 279 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES TAUGHT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and the Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Jaya Vijayasekar; and as the president of the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers (COLT), I represent over 800 world language professionals in the state of Connecticut. I am writing in support of SB No. 279. The inclusion of a two year world language requirement is essential in delivering "a superior education for Connecticut students". In order for these 21<sup>st</sup> century learners to live and compete successfully in a global society and economy, and confront the challenges to our national security, our students will require an understanding of our interconnectedness, increased skills in a minimum of one language other than their own, and appreciation of other cultures.

In a recent conversation with the Commissioner of Education, Dr. Mark McQuillan, the COLT leadership team discussed a variety of options to increase capacity in our teaching force. Efforts to date include not only recruitment among bilingual paraprofessionals, but also early recruitment at the high school and collegiate levels. In addition, I believe that Section f of the SB No. 279 allows for some credit for world language study at the middle school; this will ease the financial stress of procuring additional staff and facilitate the awarding of credits without a financial burden to the local districts.

The state of Connecticut proudly was the first state in the nation last year to collaborate with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, (ACTFL) to develop a recommendation for the awarding of high school credit equivalency. These credits are based on successfully passing nationally recognized and standardized proficiency-based tests: the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and the Written Proficiency Test (WPT). Indeed, Commissioner McQuillan, in Circular Letter C-10 from 2008-2009, has already recommended using the ACTFL OPI/WPT for the granting of high school credit for students in private world language courses: Please see: [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/circ/circ08-09/c10\\_actf\\_hscredit.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/circ/circ08-09/c10_actf_hscredit.pdf).  
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/circ/circ08-09/C10.pdf>

Now, these tests can be applied on a wider basis for students who can demonstrate proficiency through online coursework as stipulated in section f of SB 279.

Unlike in other subjects, no test development is necessary, since tests already exist. World language educators have demonstrated by this initiative that we are prepared to take the leadership in high school reform by moving students through the curriculum based on subject proficiency. Moreover, we embrace the challenge.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that world language study is no longer a "nice to know" curricular area, it has become a critical life skill for our Connecticut students. Our sincerest thanks for your support of this important and essential curriculum for our children!

Best,

Jaya Vijayasekar