

Testimony of Hunter Kodama
State Board of Education
February 18th, 2010

Good afternoon Representative Janowski and Senator Looney, and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations committee. It has been an honor to serve in my interim position on the State Board of Education for the last seven months, and it is an honor to be speaking before you today.

One year ago, I was sitting in a room very much like this one, testifying in support of a bill before the Public Health Committee. Until that point, I was always interested in government, but my testimony that day was my first experience participating in the political process. When the bill ultimately passed, I felt as though I had helped it along, and I realized the power my voice had in a setting like this.

Only a few weeks later, I applied for my current position as a student member of the State Board of Education. Citing that testimony as my experience, as well as my numerous leadership positions at school, and my diverse educational background, I was proudly chosen for the nomination. I will attempt to give you an idea of what set me apart from the other applicants.

In my thirteen years since the beginning of Kindergarten I have attended three distinct schools, all in different districts, and with differing characteristics which make them special. For the first six years of my education, I attended the Regional Multicultural Magnet School in New London. It is a mid-sized school, with students from twelve surrounding districts, and it is diverse. In fact, there is a bilingual program in which teachers speak both Spanish and English during their lessons. The experience there began to shape my life, but after fifth grade the curriculum there ended, and I had to move on.

For my middle school years, sixth through eighth grades, I attended Pine Point School, a small private school in Stonington. There, was a wonderfully nourishing and challenging academic environment, but it was slightly less diverse, and much less populous, than the magnet school. With only twenty-five students in my eighth grade class, everyone knew everyone at the school.

Then I moved to a school where, even as a senior today, I can't say I know every face in my graduating class. It is an independent, but publicly funded, regional school. It is one of the largest, and most diverse school in the state, and has one of the strongest academic programs.

I think it is evident that my experience throughout my schooling has been unusual. I have experienced public schools and private school; a large school, a small school, and one in between; extremely diverse schools, and one less so. In a setting such as the Board of Education, I believe that background will give me insight to many different school systems and their strengths and weaknesses.

At all three of those schools, leadership has been the label applied to me by my student peers, my teachers and my administrators. Even in fifth grade at the Magnet School, I have been involved in any extra-curricular activity that my schedule would allow. In the past two years, I have served as President, Treasurer and Secretary in many of those clubs.