

TESTIMONY TO APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

\$1.1 MILLION SHEFF MAGNET SCHOOL OPERATING DEFICIT

BRUCE E. DOUGLAS

GOOD AFTERNOON:

I AM BRUCE DOUGLAS, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL (CREC). CREC IS GREATER HARTFORD'S REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER, AND WE HAVE WORKED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT AND THE CITY OF HARTFORD TO ACHIEVE THE BENCHMARKS OF THE 2008 SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT IN SHEFF V. O'NEILL.

CENTRAL TO THAT EFFORT IS OUR OPERATION OF 11 MAGNET SCHOOLS, 1 CHARTER SCHOOL AND THE OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM.

I AM HERE TO REQUEST YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE INCLUSION OF \$1.1 MILLION IN THE DEFICIENCY BILL TO COVER A DEFICIT IN OUR MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR 2009-2010 THAT CANNOT OTHERWISE BE COVERED.

WHEN THE PROPOSED SDE SHEFF MAGNET SCHOOL OPERATING GRANT OF \$10,443 WAS CUT TO \$9,695, AS PART OF BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION LANGUAGE, BOTH SDE AND CREC TOLD LEGISLATORS THAT THE REDUCED GRANT WOULD NECESSITATE A SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT FOR THE 09-10 FISCAL YEAR. SINCE THEN, CREC HAS WORKED HARD TO KEEP THE FUNDING SHORTFALL AS SMALL AS POSSIBLE:

- WE HAVE RAISED MAGNET SCHOOL TUITIONS FOR SENDING SCHOOL DISTRICTS AGGRESSIVELY, AS REQUIRED BY SDE. IN 2009-2010 CREC RAISED DISTRICT TUITIONS BY 10-38%, DEPENDING ON THE MAGNET SCHOOL**

- WE HAVE COMPLIED WITH THE LEGISLATION REQUIRING THAT AT LEAST 90% OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PER-STUDENT COST AND THE SDE GRANT BE CHARGED TO THE DISTRICTS.
- WE HAVE CUT AND CONTAINED MAGNET SCHOOL OPERATING EXPENSES. DUE TO THE UNEXPECTED DECREASE IN MAGNET SCHOOL FUNDING CREC WAS FORCED TO CUT \$2 MILLION IN OPERATING COSTS.

I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT CREC COULD NOT HAVE ADDRESSED THIS FUNDING PROBLEM BY FURTHER INCREASING SENDING SCHOOL DISTRICT TUITIONS WELL INTO THE SCHOOL YEAR. THE LENGTHY BUDGET DEBATE, WHICH RESULTED IN THE REDUCTION OF THE MAGNET GRANT TO \$9,695, TOOK PLACE MANY MONTHS AFTER DISTRICT BUDGETS WERE APPROVED THROUGH PUBLIC VOTE.

CREC HAS NO ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF FUNDING TO OPERATE ITS NETWORK OF SHEFF MAGNET SCHOOLS - SCHOOLS THAT WE OPENED AT THE REQUEST OF SDE IN ORDER FOR THE STATE TO MEET ITS SHEFF GOALS.

CREC CANNOT, AND, WE THINK, SHOULD NOT, BE EXPECTED TO SUSTAIN AN OPERATING DEFICIT OF \$1.1 MILLION FOR MAGNET SCHOOLS THAT SDE REQUESTED, WHICH ARE DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE STATE'S ABILITY TO MEET THE 2009-2010 BENCHMARK OF THE STATE'S 2008 *SHEFF* AGREEMENT.

THANK YOU.