

March 1, 2010
Testimony Re: SB # 279

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleishman, and members of the Education Committee,

I am writing today to urge you to vote in favor of the World Language requirements which have been proposed as part of SB # 279. I ask you to consider the bill in its broader context.

In today's "money speaks louder than words" economy, like it or not - be it deemed economically feasible or not given the hard economic times in which we all find ourselves- we have to face facts: *We can no longer afford to design twenty-first century curriculum with twentieth century thinking.* The students of Connecticut deserve better. Our state deserves better. And to extrapolate further, our country deserves better. Studying at least one other language is a path to achieving that goal.

One thing Connecticut always prided itself on was having a ready, willing, able and *educated workforce.* What will the future economic base of this state rely on without one? The era of Connecticut manufacturing its way to prosperity is a thing of the past. Without companies that can provide good jobs, there will be a brain drain and the best educated and brightest among our kids will leave the state. It's happening already.

Compounding this dilemma is its polar opposite: How to turn around failing schools and the almost 50% high school drop out rate in this country, CT included. I believe that providing a realistic curriculum which acknowledges the pluralism of today's society is one way to engage students who have disengaged from their education and to help them find the relevance of what they are expected to learn.

If we were to allow our moral compasses to point in their true direction on this matter, I believe that, to a person, we would be in agreement and could take action that would speak louder than money. As educators, legislators and parents, we are the only advocates our children have. It behooves us all to find a way to work together to make this happen. It behooves us to make smart decisions, to think ahead in order to give our students the kind of preparation and formation they will need to be successful, not only in a global economy but in a global job market.

If you consider **how unprecedented the times in which we live are, *how technology has stepped up the ante and that *it's all about communication** – cell phones, iPods, Twittering and tweeting, FaceBook - how can you leave out a meaningful WL component as being irrelevant and unnecessary to a twenty-first century high school curriculum?

I'd be happy to provide the url's for studies and articles that show what countries that currently lead the U.S. in education right now provide in the way of World Language education. In most cases, study of a language begins in K and the primary grades and makes a 12 year sequence possible. How will our students fare when they meet up in an international job market with these European and Asian Counterparts?

Thank you for your kind consideration of my remarks.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Coppola, retired Spanish (French) FLES K-6
Orange, CT, Public School System