

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

P.O. Box 290
Rocky Hill, CT 06067-0290

Ph: (860) 721-0317
1-800-378-8020
Fx: (860) 721-0323
Web Site: www.svft.org

Testimony of Sue Loud, General Education Department Head at
Eli Whitney Technical High School
State Vocational Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4200A

SB 379 An Act Concerning Vocational-Technical Schools

Education Committee
March 8, 2010

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Committee members;

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am the General Education Department Head at Eli Whitney Technical High School.

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) has faced a number of challenges over the last several years. Discussion about how best to address these issues is long overdue and I applaud your efforts to rectify the problems with this bill.

As a thirteen year veteran of the CTHSS, I have taught at three of our schools and have seen firsthand the disparity that exists within our system. This Fall I returned to Eli Whitney to take on a new position. I transferred from Kaynor Tech in Waterbury, a school which had just undergone an extensive update. Many of my colleagues asked me how I could leave the palatial conditions at Kaynor to return to Whitney, a school that had not seen any significant renovation since its opening in 1957. As I walked into my office in August, I looked around at the decrepit furniture and ceiling with tiles that were in the process of falling down, I started to question my decision. Touring the classrooms and trade technology areas was depressing. The physical plant was old and tired and not worthy of our students and their desire to learn. Nevertheless, I knew that Whitney was on the bonding list for a renovation to the tune of \$98 million dollars. Surely I could hold on for a couple of years - the students had!

Then this past October, State Vocational Federation of Teachers President Rick Tanasi noticed that Whitney was no longer on the bonding list. The shock wave that reverberated among the faculty, staff and students of Whitney was intense. Students, their parents and instructors worried about the future of the school, especially wondering if we would be the next 'Wright Tech'. Was our school being neglected because they wanted to close it? Thankfully, SB 379 would alleviate some of the stress we are now facing. It not only addresses the closing of schools, but would provide funding for much needed maintenance and equipment.

Our students come to school every day and see a respectful learning community. Many of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and sharing this vision with them is critical for their present and future. The Whitney mission seeks to establish a safe and comprehensive learning environment for our students where everyone is accountable, respectful, and committed to the betterment of themselves and those in the community. It is very difficult to fulfill this mission successfully when the Governor will not release the funds approved by the General Assembly to renovate Eli Whitney Technical High School.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.