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Open Choice statement

Good afternoon to you all,

My name is Evelyn Richardson and I am here today to show my support and express my concern on the Open Choice Bill. I have two children who are a part of the Choice Program. They are presently attending school in Granby CT. My daughter has attended Kelly Lane since the 4th grade and she is now on her way to the middle school. My son who is on his way to second grade started from Kindergarten. I must say that I am extremely satisfied with the education my children have and are receiving as a part of my choice to get them into a school that offers them a competitive education which just so happens to be in the suburbs.

When I originally signed my daughter up for a choice school I must say that I was not aware of how much a suburban education costs or how much the state would invest in my child's suburban education. What I did know was that my daughters teacher in her failing HTFD school in private told me that my child's scores were so good that they actually were holding up the schools scores. She said that my daughters school had nothing else to offer her at that time and not to quote her on it but that I should get her in a private school that could challenge her more because at this point she was actually taking on the role of the teachers assistant rather than a student who needed to be taught in her classroom. The knowledge that I left with after that encounter was that although others kids were learning my daughter was remaining stagnant while waiting for some of her classmates. So when I found out that I could sign up for Choice, I hurried to do so.

Amazingly enough after hearing that my daughter was in the top 10% academically in her school when she went to Granby it took her to her and my amazement a year and a half to be in the top percentile of her class. My daughter's school offered her all kinds of extra help and services which she struggled through initially until she reached her goal. Then my son also presently receives extra support after the teacher suggested that an IEP be done and he was found to not need special educational services but that he would benefit from extra help.

I said all that to say this: I really do applaud my children's schools for their support in providing my children with the same education they provide their towns residents. If I could afford it I would pay for the

education they are receiving so I am also truly thankful for the Open Choice program. I would like to see suburban towns get an increase per child. As much as I love my town where I am a registered voter(HTFD) the school they went to had failed them. I would like to have the comfort of knowing that suburban districts are not getting burdened with my children but that just as they are providing my child with a necessary tool for success that they are being equally comforted in providing this service.

I also would like to see more children in urban towns have the opportunity to have exposure to schools which are not over crowded, under paid and staffed and that have the necessary skill to teach children regardless of where they live, what their culture is or how much money they have.

Lastly, I would never want those in charge of creating the budgets concerning this matter to forget that these teachers and staff will need to be continuously educated with professional training in order to be equipped to deal with diverse cultures in a school that was and still is predominately white students. And to be honest I have not met one minority teacher in either of my kids schools. I strongly feel that this training should be done in all schools where it is not equally racially and economically diverse concerning the students and the teachers.

In closing I would like to say that I am a mother, a concerned citizen, and community activist who wants the same opportunity my children have to be opened up for other children and families. There are hundreds of children on the waiting list. Please make it possible for them to get a good education also. These children are our future and I want the future to be a promising one full of adults who were educationally equipped to do the job of leading us. And I want those leaders to come from all racial and economic backgrounds.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Evelyn R. Richardson