

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Rep. Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Lydia Tedone and I am Vice Chair of the Simsbury Board of Education; a member of the Capitol Region Education Council and Vice President of the CT Association of Boards of Education.

I am testifying today in favor of Senate Bill 438, an Act Concerning the Open Choice Program Funding.

The Open Choice Program has been determined to be one of the most important and successful Sheff remedies. Undoubtedly, it has been favored by parents, school systems and the parties to the Sheff agreement, including the State of Connecticut. However, each year the program is consistently under funded and as a result, Open Choice has not met its state-mandated enrollment requirements.

This is true, despite the fact that our school systems are willing to enroll more students to meet the mandate. However, \$2,500 per student is less than one-third the amount necessary to provide adequate resources to fund the program.

The school systems, of which I represent Simsbury, who have embraced the spirit of Sheff have made it a priority to participate in the Open Choice Program. They have also committed to accept the enrollment mandate set by the State of Connecticut. Now it is up to the legislature to provide the resources necessary to accomplish the task.