

Testimony  
Appropriations  
February 28, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the committee. I am Sharon Palmer, President AFT Connecticut, a 28,000 member AFL-CIO union.

The CommPACT Schools initiative is a unique, collaborative partnership among education stakeholders. Through UConn's Neag School of Education unprecedented field based assistance is available to urban schools. The direct connection with UConn's School of Education insures research based best practices can be provided to school districts in a collaborative way. This is the only initiative to date which partners public school superintendents, school administrators and teacher unions. We are all strongly committed to the initiative.

This program is designed to make systemic change in school districts. It is not another grant for a year or two to try something "new". It is to bring accepted best practices to the unique needs of urban districts. That means addressing the complexity of the challenges facing urban districts by establishing a school climate conducive of learning; supporting intensive mentoring and professional development for staff; developing a school program around a schedule which incorporates time for team work, collaboration, and a solid standards based curriculum as well as imbedding a comprehensive parent involvement component.

The program is in it's third year and is already showing promising results. For example;

- CMT scores at Barnum elementary School in Bridgeport increased 50% in math.
- 85.4% of students reached grade level proficiency at Washington Elementary in Waterbury and West Side Middle reached Safe Harbor status.
- Student behavior and parent involvement have achieved measurable improvements.

We urge you to continue support for CommPACT Schools. Two and 1/2 years of important work will be wasted just when we are beginning to see positive results. Matching private funds will be lost if the state does not continue funding. Last year the State of Connecticut provided \$107./pupil. This year it is \$147, due to SIG grants with increased program and student support. What a bargain for such important work!! Please continue the funding.

Thank you.