

Testimony for Education Committee Hearing on AAC School Districts, HB 6498
March 7, 2011

Representatives Fleischmann and McCrory and members of the Education Committee

My name is Kim Yannon and I am a music educator in Cheshire, a doctoral candidate at the University of Hartford and President of Connecticut Music Educators Association. I am here to speak, on behalf of our membership and students, to HB 6498, specifically the proposal to repeal Section 7, subsection (c) of the general statutes concerning the implementation of the high school reform requirements for graduation and the proposed delay for said implementation until 2020. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those on this committee responsible for recognizing the importance of arts education in creating informed, capable, 21st Century thinkers who are prepared for the challenges of higher education and the modern work force and for creating a high school reform matrix which includes a dedicated one-credit requirement in the fine arts.

To quote Daniel Pink from his book *A Whole New Mind*, “The last few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind – computer programmers who could crank code, lawyers who could craft contracts, MBA’s who could crunch numbers. But the keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind – creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers and meaning makers. These people – artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers – will now reap society’s richest rewards and share its greatest joys” Those of us in education and those of us responsible for steering education policy at the state level must be informed as to the role arts education plays in our students’ development and the unique position arts education is in to deliver instruction in these 21st Century Skills. Creativity, big-picture thinking, pattern recognition, meaning making are all hallmarks of arts education and are now widely recognized as crucial skills for future success.

I am including a link in my written testimony to the 21st Century Skills Map for Arts Education (<http://www.menc.org/news/view/press-release-p21-and-arts-associations-release-21st-century-skills-map>) developed by The Partnership for 21st Century Skills and released at a Capitol Hill briefing by representatives from P21. These include the American Alliance for Theatre & Education, the Educational Theatre Association, the National Art Education Association, MENC: The National Association for Music Education, the National Dance Association, and the National Dance Education Organization. The map provides educator-created examples of how the fine arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual and media arts) can be fused with basic skills to create engaging learning experiences that promote 21st century knowledge and skill acquisition. I urge the members of the committee to access the link and peruse the map.

There is a growing body of evidence gathered from research that tells us that quality arts education has a positive effect on the achievement gap, especially in low income and urban school districts, on school attendance rates, graduation rates, standardized test

scores and overall achievement in school. We know this, and that is why the legislature passed high school reform including a one credit requirement in the fine arts. It is also why the state university system will require one credit in the arts for admission starting in 2015.

All educators are acutely aware of the economic realities we face: we are homeowners, tuition-payers, food and fuel consumers as well as public employees. We are also aware of the balancing act that must occur to provide the best education possible for our students, our future, while maintaining budgets and enduring shortfalls and deficits. It is understandable that this committee would consider a delay in implementing a policy which may result in budgetary challenges to the towns and cities who have not already seen the writing on the wall and implemented an arts requirement in their high schools. However, I implore you to continue your support of the high school reform matrix including a one credit arts requirement and to not lose sight of what is important for our students. This legislation was incredible example of foresight, resolve and leadership and a demonstration of public policy which is informed by a combination of research and common sense. We must continue to push for excellence in our schools, and excellence includes quality arts education experiences for all children.

May I conclude by inviting all of you to join the membership of CMEA at our In Service Conference VIP reception to be held on Friday, April 8 at the Connecticut Convention Center. I will follow up with both an email and written invitation. We would love to show you what we do every day for the students in Connecticut.

Respectfully submitted,

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