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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Testimony of: EDUARDO V. GENAO

In support of: RAISED BILL No. 6502 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Honorable Chairmen Fleischmann and Stillman and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Eddie Genao and I'm here today to testify in support of BILL NUMBER 6502 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM.

I have been working for the Hartford Public Schools since February 2005 and currently serve as the Hartford Director of the Regional School Choice Office.

The Hartford Public Schools system supports any proposal that increases the reciprocal exchange of students between Hartford and racially isolated suburban school districts through all programs, including Open Choice and the expansion of Hartford's system of high performing host magnet schools.

Under this context, we therefore support the Crandall school program, as it would allow the creation of these innovation schools within the Hartford school district. We also support the ability of the Commissioner to increase funding for Open Choice participation within the available appropriations.

We would like to see in the legislation, however, language that would address the ability of any district to declare as many seats as possible without any cap imposed by the State Department of Education. The current bill does address the issue that some districts within the immediate suburban ring of Hartford are not permitted to participate in Open Choice and that Hartford is only permitted to offer 75 seats for Open Choice into Hartford even though this year we have 1804 suburban students who applied for specific non-magnet Hartford public schools. The inability of some districts to exchange students with Hartford and the SDE imposed cap on the number of Open Choice students that can come into Hartford denies families what the rest of the state has – an Open Choice to attend the school that the parents and students feel is the best match for them.

We ask that you please consider including the following language in the bill: "Any district within the Greater Hartford Region can declare as many seats as necessary to accommodate Open Choice students."

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on this important issue and we ask that you support Raised Bill No. 6502 – An Act Concerning the Open Choice Program inserting the proposed language giving any district the ability to open as many seats as possible for Open Choice student applicants.

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