

Oral Testimony Before the Connecticut Finance Revenue & Bonding Committee
Submitted By: Jami Sherwood, Owner of Simply Signs, Stamford CT
Monday, March 7, 2011

Good afternoon members of the committee, Senator Daily and Representative Widlitz. My name is Jami Sherwood and I am the owner of Simply Signs in Stamford. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding Section 6 of Senate Bill 1007, and the Digital Media and Motion Picture Tax Credit Program.

Simply Signs provides promotional items such as signage and apparel to a variety of businesses in Fairfield County and throughout the State of Connecticut. In 2009, I found myself in the same situation as many small business owners in Connecticut; concerned with a significant decline in revenue, as my clients tightened their belts due to the recession.

My relationship with NBCUniversal began when I met Tracie Wilson, Senior Vice President of Programming & Development for Stamford Media Center, who is also testifying before you today, at an annual Stamford Downtown Special Services District dinner in May of 2009. As a longtime member of the business community in Stamford, I introduced her and her colleague to everyone at our table, and we began discussing my company and their business needs.

My first project was a small one. SMC needed banners for Alive @ Five, an annual summer music festival held in the streets of downtown Stamford, which they were sponsoring. The next project was new business cards and business forms, followed by signs for their parking lot. The delivery of each order prompted a conversation about another one, from tee shirts, hats and apparel to signage and stationary. As a result of this continued business, Stamford Media Center accounted for 22% of our sales last year.

In the printing industry, it's common for clients to simply place an order for 100 tee shirts and hang up the phone, but Tracie Wilson and her colleagues at Stamford Media Center have included me as part of their creative team. Each new product is an opportunity to sit down, bounce ideas off one other, and work collaboratively towards a final product.

Many of my friends are fellow small business owners in Stamford, and the story remains the same no matter who you ask – NBCUniversal means big business for Stamford. Their staff eats at local restaurants. Their audience members shop in our shopping malls and their guests stay in our hotels. The list of dry cleaners, construction companies, security guards, cleaning services and transportation companies that benefit from NBCU's relocation seems to go on forever, and their contribution doesn't end there.

They continue to give back to the community by supporting the arts, immersing themselves in the business community and working with non-profits to help those less fortunate in the Stamford area. The loss of NBCU's presence in the City of Stamford would be a loss for Connecticut, and I encourage the legislature to carefully weigh the benefits of any changes to the tax credit program that could undermine its ability to attract and sustain successful production companies like NBCU.