



Marcy 15, 2011

Good Afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Richard Tariff and I am the Director of EASTCONN Adult Services which serves 21 towns in Eastern Connecticut. Previously, I was the Director of the Vernon Regional Adult Education Program. Next month, I will be recognized as the Adult Education leader for Connecticut by our state organization.

As a Director of Adult Education in Connecticut who has been involved in the Adult Credit Diploma Program (Adult High School) since 1984, I have concerns regarding changing the age of withdrawal from high school in Bill #6585 when the new law raising the withdrawal age to 17 does not take effect until July 1, 2011. In an ideal world, we would love to see all students remain in high school and graduate and then proceed to successfully transitioning into the workforce, future training, college, and/or the armed forces. From my 25+ years in Adult Education, I can share countless stories as to why students needed to leave their high schools. Anything from incarceration, substance abuse, family crisis, economics, pregnancy, bullying, harassment and need for employment are some of the common reasons why students leave high school.

Having the Superintendent of Schools or their designee, be involved with the transition of the student withdrawing from high school will be one more avenue to retain the students within their high school. With that said, this meeting will also provide one more vehicle to orient and transition the student contemplating withdrawal, to transfer to adult education. In my professional career as an adult educator, we have provided thousands of students the opportunity of obtaining an adult high school diploma which allowed them to be positive role models for their children. Data tells us that a child's odds to graduate from high school are much better if their custodial parent has a high school diploma.

On July 1, 2011 the law will change for students to withdraw from high school to age 17. It is my hope and expectation that Bill 6585 will not address changing the age of withdrawal for a high school student. As explained previously, there are many legitimate reasons why a student may need to leave the traditional high school. Therefore, by allowing students alternate pathways in obtaining a high school diploma is critical and needs to continue for our children, our economy, and our state.

In order to ensure that all students have the opportunity to receive a high school diploma, I would suggest to you that there needs to be multiple options in order to achieve this most important of goals for our public school students. I hope that during your discussions around regional efficiencies and options that high school alternatives are included in those discussions recognizing the need for alternatives within the conventional high school as well as non-traditional pathways. As people who care about our students and our future workforce, I urge you not to reduce the options for students in gaining their high school credentials.

On behalf of the thousands of student that have benefited from Adult Education in Connecticut, I thank you for your time.

Thank you for consideration of my comments and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Richard Tariff
Director of Adult Services