

TESTIMONY provided by Tom Cronin, Director of Education at EASTCONN to the Education Committee on February 22, 2012

Good afternoon, I am Tom Cronin, the director of Education Services at EASTCONN, one of the six regional educational service centers. I am here today in support of SB 24, specifically section 13, on behalf of our parents and students at our 2 magnet high schools, a middle college on the campus of QVCC in Danielson and a Performing Arts Magnet High School in the renovated Capitol Theater in downtown Willimantic.

The additional 5 million dollars in state tuition support included in the Governor's budget is very welcome since we have not had an increase in tuition support in 4 years. These additional funds will begin to equalize state tuition support across all magnet schools in the state. It will allow us to continue to provide the high quality program our districts, parents and students have come to expect and deserve regardless of where they live in Connecticut.

We hope all of you will support this expenditure as you go forward.

Also, I would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention another inequity issue in funding magnet schools, and that is of transportation support. The transportation grant has also not increased in a number of years. This remains an impediment for students having access to magnet schools in eastern Connecticut and a hardship for all involved as the lack of transportation support significantly impacts effective implementation of school choice. We would ask that you consider increasing this support from its current level of only \$1300 in non-Sheff regions in order to once again begin to equalize magnet school support regardless of where students reside.

Thank you for all of your support for the students in Connecticut and the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.