

Testimony S.B. 24

My name is Mark Ribbens the principal of Regional Center for the Arts operated by Cooperative Educational Services and located in Trumbull CT. I ask you to support the increased funding for magnet schools as proposed in S.B. 24.

At RCA, as a part time magnet, we serve students from 21 high schools located in 14 Fairfield County school districts. About 45% of our students are from Bridgeport. In my conversations with parents and students over the years, I have found that participation in our program has motivated many of our students to do well in their academics and graduate. I am proud to say 98% of our students continue their education at a 2 year or 4 year college.

Our goal is to simply provide our students with the sort of performing arts education unavailable elsewhere in our region. The 11 nominations our production of the musical "Hairspray" received last year at the Connecticut High School Musical Theater Awards in addition to our own Lucy Fitzsimons of Fairfield being voted best female lead performer in the state by the same organization are recent examples of our success at achieving that goal.

Our proximity to New York City and the generosity of many professionals has over the years permitted us to expose our students to the talents of performers and technical people who work in the city. Increased funding for magnet schools may permit us to enhance the experiences we offer our students with more master class opportunities, or to work side by side with some of the top technical talent in the country, and as our mission statement puts it to: "prepare them to reach their fullest artistic potential." Thank you.