

Testimony Before Educational Committee

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James J Maroney

Majority Leader

Milford Board of Education

Good Afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Education Committee. My name is James Maroney, I serve as Vice Chairman of the Milford Board of Education in addition I am the owner of First Choice College Placement, a college preparation business that works with students and families in the college search process. My work gives me a unique perspective in seeing many of the challenges our high school graduates are facing as they decide to move on to college or go right into the job market.

This is an exciting time for education, and especially for education in Connecticut. I would like to applaud Governor Malloy for his goal of making Connecticut a leader in education, instead of a follower. There are three key components for educational success: Teacher, Student, and Curriculum. The National Common Core Standards and more specifically for us the Connecticut Common Core Standards address the curriculum issue.

There are several proposals that address the teacher by seeking to provide adequate professional development and to insure that there is a quality teacher in front of each student. I would like to comment on Section 17 which creates the Connecticut attract the best teacher scholarship program. This is a great idea to help elevate the profession of teaching and attract students to stay in the state, similar to the Connecticut Innovation Technology Scholars program of the mid-2000's. I would like to encourage you to consider broadening the scope of the program to allow for teachers who work at any public or technical school in Connecticut, not just the schools identified as a priority school district or those that are designated as a commissioner's network school.

There are two key reasons I believe that you should consider this suggestion. First, there are already two federal programs that offer incentives for teachers to teach in a high need area in schools that serve at risk students: the federal TEACH grant program and Public Service Loan Forgiveness. Second, and more importantly, all children deserve to have a quality teacher and I would argue all of our schools need quality teachers. ASORA Education in a recent report analyzed the National Assessment of Educational Progress data and found that even when you control demographics and remove those schools where more than 20% of the students have high need, only about

half of our students are NAEP proficient. That is, even at our advantaged schools, we are leaving half of the children behind.

Last fall I attended the CT CEF conference and had the opportunity to hear Michigan State Professor William Schmidt speak. One statistic he cited really resonated with me. Students who test in the top 5% of the US for math only test at the 50% in the world. Our best students are only average relative to the rest of the world. We are not preparing our students to compete with other Connecticut students, or other students from around the United States, we are preparing them to compete in a Global economy. Our children deserve the best education, so that we can have a highly educated workforce that will allow our state to attract the best companies and the best jobs which will improve all of our quality of life. I understand that there are finite resources and we need to prioritize how we spend our money.

I ask you to consider perhaps offering reduced loan forgiveness to teachers who teach in other schools not deemed as at risk, because I know that there are many good schools, which while not at risk, want to become great schools and do better for their students, and they can use your help.