

**Testimony of Ivy Farinella L.P.N., M.Ed. In Support of
Raised Bill 6504: An Act Concerning Alternative School Programs**

Education Committee
March 4, 2013

I submit this testimony on behalf of vulnerable children that need and deserve a quality education in order to actualize their potential and live a life with success & purpose. I've been a DCF licensed foster home since 2001 as well as an adoptive parent since 2004. In this time frame I've had many children in my home that have required services to address medical & mental health issues which often include special needs which impact them educationally. Many of these children have had difficult circumstances that have led them to alternative schools or programs. I believe that this bill will insure monitoring and improved standards for these schools that serve vulnerable children

My experience & observations of some alternative schools or programs don't fit the definition of "school" which as a noun is defined as: an institution for educating children or people before college. Many of these places appear to be merely a holding tank until the child ages out & they have gained little educationally or socially, which may become a dead end for them.

Hopefully children that receive a quality education will be prepared to attend college or a technical school or other specialty school that will equip them to be productive members of a community. Often the children in these alternative schools are not well equipped to continue in education or employment and become discouraged by low wage jobs or no jobs. Many end up homeless or incarcerated.

I've many stories that can illustrate poor outcomes for kids receiving alternative educations. One girl I'd had came with a history of disrupted placements and had been enrolled in an alternative high school which I transported her to ensuring she was there. She attended but I began to wonder what they were teaching for her grammar was poor & her basic knowledge scant. She did the homework when she had an assignment and had dreams of going to college. Unfortunately she was ill prepared for college and flunked out in the first semester. This extinguished her dreams and she became resigned and dropped out of life. I believe that if the school she had attended had higher standards she would have had a very different outcome & probably completed college.

Another foster child came to me as a teenager & had been disrupted educationally by her oppositional behavior and was sent to an alternative program. This was a very good supportive program in a school with low ratios of students to teacher. She got one on one help academically & did well at that school. Unfortunately that was a program to catch her up academically & when she returned to the mainstream public school she reverted to her oppositional and disruptive mode & was suspended. Eventually she needed intensive

psychological help & received that. However her needs were not met in public school when she returned from a lengthy hospitalization & she quit. Later when she had turned 21 she was accepted back into DCF and attended a school for a specialized certificate. She is now working full time and preparing to move out and into her own apartment. Her confidence has grown with this success and she may continue to advance her career with more education in the future. I believe that the supports she received were paramount in her achieving her goal.

Bill 6504 would move these alternative schools and programs closer to accountability for meeting these children's needs academically and emotionally. Data collection would be helpful for this process.

Thank you for reading this testimony.

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