

I'm John Pellino, a resident of East Hampton, and Associate Director of Talcott Mountain Science Center in Avon. I've been an educator working in science education statewide, including high ability students, for 32 years. I am also incoming co-president of the Connecticut Association for the Gifted and have served as a board member and vice-president of CAG on a volunteer basis.

A plan for advancing with high-ability, high-potential learners in Connecticut Secondary schools is desirable if not essential. I believe raised Bill 1000 addresses this need and should be supported, passed and implemented.

Study after study cites a lack of workplace-ready students in this country. Numerous areas - rapidly developing fields like green energy and genomics, as well as the information technology at the heart of finance and commerce - are all ready, willing and able to employ well-prepared professionals.

While these new areas of personal, national, and economic growth move ever forward, in many ways, our education system is often hobbled by archaic structures. We still teach on an agrarian calendar. We still prescribe a fixed number of hours, days, and years for public formal education, while most other aspects of work and learning have become ever more flexible and thereby more attractive and effective. Some of these habits have valuable logistical reasons. Some however are like the story of the home cook who could always cut the end off a roast - when asked why, she said her mother did it that way, when the mother was asked, she said her mother did it that way. When someone finally asked the grandmother, she said it was because the pan she had that day 50 years ago was too small.

We don't want to be like that. One size does not fit all. A significant number of students are capable of different rates of learning. Failure of an educational system to address these differences, like any differences among students, result in reduced opportunities, frustration on the parts of students, teachers and parents, and puts everyone right back here in this room in five years, wondering yet again why students are unchallenged, unfulfilled and why higher education and employers are yet again left wanting.

There are a number of existing opportunities for advancement and non-traditional learning in high schools. They are not available or utilized in all towns, and there is no statewide coordination or dissemination of these opportunities. That sort of leadership needs to come from the state, and if supported by citizens as seen in their legislators, formalized in statute and regulation.

Connecticut has a long and rich history of innovation, creativity and head-up thinking. This bill would go a long way to ensure that this history extends to all learners statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this effort.

John Pellino