

**TESTIMONY OF APRIL GOFF BROWN, DIRECTOR OF COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT, CATHOLIC CHARITIES
HB 1002 AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
EDUCATION COMMITTEE, MARCH 4, 2013**

Co-Chairs Stillman and Fleischmann, Vice-Chairs Bye and McCrory, Ranking Members Boucher and Ackert, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, my name is April Goff Brown. I am the Director of the Comprehensive Youth Services Department at Catholic Charities and I am here to testify in **favor of Raised Bill 1002, An Act Concerning Community Schools.**

Catholic Charities has been a lead agency partner in the Hartford community school model since 2008 at the Thirman L. Milner School. The Hartford model is aligned with national best practice promoted by the Coalition for Community Schools and the Children’s Aid Society – National Center for Community Schools. While we are very supportive of the agenda of expanding community schools across Connecticut, we have identified the following **concerns within Section 3 of the legislation.**

The creation of separate” local community school governance boards” is redundant. The Community School Director sits as voting member on the School Governance Council in order to fully integrate and align the partnership efforts with the work of the school.

“Each local community school governance board shall appoint a full time community school coordinator”. The lead agency model used in Hartford places the hiring of the staff under the auspices of the lead agency partner. The school governance council has been engaged in the hiring process for the Community School Director. This director coordinates partnerships and services that wrap around the education program at the school. The community school director’s work is shaped by participating on the School Governance Council, data teams, staff meetings, and meetings with the principal. This model brings youth development expertise and a range of in-kind agency social service supports to the students and parents.

“The Director of the Family Resource Center at the School may serve as the community school coordinator.” Work of both positions cannot be done by one person. The Director of the Family Resource Center can be a strong partner in the engagement of families into the educational process, a key component of a community school.

The bill also does not have any reference to a lead agency model. The lead agency model in Hartford leverages community resources in support of the school in a well-aligned and integrated fashion. We would recommend that the legislation ask for a plan for the community school operation and that each district be permitted to use the most appropriate model of community school for their district.

With those suggestions in mind, Catholic Charities is excited about the opportunities inherent in this proposed bill and stands ready to support the bill by sharing our expertise and resources to expand the strategy across the state.