



**Connecticut Education
Association**

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Testimony

*Mark Waxenberg, Executive Director
Connecticut Education Association
Before the
Education Committee*

SB 1002 An Act Concerning Community Schools

March 4, 2013

Good afternoon Representative Fleischmann, Senator Stillman and members of the Education Committee. My name is Mark Waxenberg, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Education Association. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 1002, An Act Concerning Community Schools.

As we look at the needs of our students educationally, socially, and emotionally, we cannot divorce those needs from those of the family of that student and the community that student returns to on a daily basis. The 21st Century has clearly defined the gaps that exist between segments of our society and the needs that the poorer among us have. We must recognize that schools as they were once defined in our society must change not only to meet the needs of the students who attend those schools, but also to meet the needs of the community that surrounds those schools. For too long schools have been looked upon as buildings that open at 8 a.m. and close at 4 p.m. with a sole purpose of educating students who attend during that time.

To examine the needs of the community, one of which is the education of the youth of that community we need to transition into a model that has that building open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.. Schools today need to be lighthouses of hope for all members of the community, young and old. They need to offer services that will fully address the needs of the young and the old within that community. Schools cannot be viewed just as a place where children go to learn; it must be viewed as a place where the community goes to learn--from education to English to job skills and much, much, more.

The bill before you is not a mandate, it is a model - a model that if implemented correctly and with vision can move everyone closer to full participation in the American dream. We do not need to keep hearing the statistics of what students and adults can't do, we need to start focusing on what they can do and embrace that and nurture that within a thriving Community School model. We cannot just "pluck" the best and the brightest out of a community, send them to a charter or magnet school and think we are making progress. That attitude will only further the gap between the haves and the have nots. We need to have a model that will serve all students and address the needs of the whole community if we are to see progress.

The model before you is comprehensive and well thought out. It has been proven effective in various communities across our country and deserves to be implemented here in Connecticut. There should be no additional cost associated with creating this model because it falls within the guidelines of Alliance Schools and Network Schools which are already funded and proposed to be funded in this budget.

If we are truly going to see advances in our society-educationally and socio economically, we need to have a vision from birth to death on how we can meet the needs of our citizens between the alpha and the omega. We need to stop giving lip service to programs that we know work, and we need to take risks on programs that we believe will work. We need to start embracing models that show promise for all within a community and stop focusing on the few programs that divide our community.

We need to pass Senate Bill 1002, An Act Concerning Community Schools.

Thank You