

Good afternoon Honorable Senators and Representatives. My name is Zulynette Morales. I am a resident of Hartford, a second year student at the University of Connecticut's School of Social Work and an intern at Service Employees International Union District 1199. I am here to state my opposition against raised House Bill 6430 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL COUNCIL TO SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT. This bill explicitly states that it will be targeting low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color and so on. Basically it will be targeting marginalized groups of students. The one piece of this bill that sticks out to me the most is the accommodation for "better meeting the needs of current and future employers". What about accommodating to the needs of our neediest students? Has it now gotten to the point where we are now trying to create workers instead of learners?

I went to school here in Hartford before there were all of these different academies and so many magnet schools. I went when students were put onto learning tracks (such as basic, general, honors and AP) based on how well they read, wrote and so on. I have seen good intention cause more harm than good. In 2002, I was in a freshman class of approximately 500 students; I graduated in 2006 with a class of 123. I have also worked in a middle school here in Hartford, where certain students are removed from classes because they cannot learn the way that other students do. This bill suggests "Small learning centers and academies for students who are considered hard to serve". I can understand the intention behind offering alternatives to students, who may not be able to fit the school mold as it currently exists, but separation does not give one a sense of community and labeling does not give a child a sense of control over their future. There are schools that already separate their disruptive students out into the no-man's-land portables or holds their students in the auditorium while CMT's and other testing is going on so that their scores will not skew the results. I believe that separate but equal did not work in the United States on race for a reason. It was not equal. What are the hidden messages we'll be sending with a bill like this? I believe the latent consequences of this bill will be a false sense of choice.

Truly, where is the choice for them in all of this? What I read is alternative learning, alternative pathway, career, improvements but what I know is steering, imposing, control and "get them out of our classrooms as quickly and as quietly as you can". I have worked with youth from Hartford for many years and something I have always known is that if you want to know what children need and what adolescents need, it's very similar to how you would approach an adult: How can I help you? What do you need? They will let you know. In summary, I would like to repeat that I oppose this bill and would hope the members of the committee make drastic changes to an idea like this. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak and for the committee's time and respect.