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TESTIMONY

Committee Bill No. 473: **AN ACT CONCERNING MAGNET SCHOOLS**

Good morning Representatives thank you for the opportunity to testify on the matter before you. My name is Bryan Hall and I am the Secretary for the East Hartford Board of Education.

Like my colleagues who have preceded me, I am here to ask you to amend bill 473, an act concerning magnet schools and ask that you address a significant issue regarding magnet schools and the financial hardship for local school districts to fund escalating tuition costs for district students attending these magnet systems.

As a Board Member and parent of a child in the East Hartford Public Schools system, one of my greatest frustrations is working together with my fellow board members to secure the demanded funding to support tuition payments for students that do not attend our district schools. To be perfectly clear, I understand and support the choices of parents to send their children where they feel fit, but do not feel that the financial obligation of the Sheff v. O'Neill settlement should be enacted on to the detriment of students that are still attending the local district.

As has been previously mentioned, 1155 East Hartford students are currently enrolled in magnet schools. This number has steadily grown from 2008 and does not seem to have an end. While this number is challenging and obviously very concerning, more startling is the massive tuition bill of \$2,728,913. This number represents over 3% of our budget and continues to drive significant discussions regarding cutting programs for students in our local schools to pay for programming for students outside of our district.

I am asking you to amend bill 473 to include language that would place a 5% cap on the responsibility of the local district to pay tuition costs above the cap limit. While I do understand the challenge all financial solutions place on political leaders, you will note in the documents that our Board Chair and Superintendent have produced that this solution would cost, for the 6 impacted towns across the state, only \$2,927,520.00.

The 5% cap solution provides significant financial relief to the most impacted districts while giving stability and predictability to all districts across the state of the end game of rising magnet tuitions. This solution is not only financially doable, but also politically savvy and represents what is truly best for kids.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you and thank you for your continued support of East Hartford students.