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Testimony for SB1055 (raised) AN ACT CONCERNING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS,  
Joint Education Committee Public Hearing -March 11, 2015

I would like to start by thanking the Education Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak today. West Hartford's gifted and talented program, Quest, is a program that has benefited me wholly.

So, I was "accepted" to join Quest in 6th grade, 3 years after everyone else in my grade had started. My teacher in 5th grade recommended me, and for that I am grateful. In 6th grade I participated in History Day, a national academic competition based off of a year-long research project. I placed very well. The win gave me confidence and the ambition to try harder the next year. What is important is that for the whole year, I was working one-on-one with Mrs. Hunt and we developed a special connection where we shared new knowledge and I gained critical and constructive feedback on my latest project. Mrs. Hunt got me really excited about history; and Quest got me really excited about history; and History Day got me really excited about history.

But it was not just history; I was constantly challenged to exceed and achieve excellence—then I discovered I became the person that never achieved excellence. And by that I mean that I was always pushing myself to go further and learn more—that is what I mean when I saw Quest benefited me wholly.

Well, now I am a sophomore at Conard High School and I still compete in History Day every year because I love it! I still am very competitive with myself, and a perfectionist. But I get results—History Day and Quest enriched my understanding of techniques we were learning about in other classes.

For example, this year Conard offered for the first time AP Seminar. AP Seminar is a Capstone course, therefore it is researched-based. Last week, we submitted part one of the AP Exam; which included an individual 1200 word research paper and 200 word reflection, a 3000 word group research paper, and a 10 minute group presentation. I am confident in my final product because I developed, nurtured, and perfected all the skills needed to complete an assignment as such in Quest.

My point is that Quest took a confused and curious adolescent and gave her something to obsess over: challenging herself. I can safely say that if I did not participate in Quest, I would not have the same caliber of work ethic as I do today. My point is that I could not have been as successful as I am today without Quest and I would love to see more kids exposed to the same program and given the same opportunities I had.

The enrichment program was an extremely important part of my life for three years. And now, through high school, I experience it's reverberating influence as I complete classes and continue History Day. In conclusion, the challenge Quest provided for me was imperative to my education and development as a person and a student.

