

January 20, 2015

**Testimony of Mark D. Benigni**

Good Afternoon Senator Duff, Representative Janowski, Senator Kane, Representative Buck-Taylor, and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee.

My name is Mark Benigni and it is an honor and privilege to be appointed Chair of the SERC Board of Directors by Governor Daniel P. Malloy. I thank the committee for the opportunity to share my interest in the SERC Chair position and a little about myself.

I am the proud father of two public school children, Bria in third grade and Blake in second grade. Their positive experiences and joy of learning are what makes me so optimistic about the future of public education in Connecticut and across our great nation. I am a product of the Meriden public school system and honored to serve as their superintendent of schools. I am a former teacher, assistant principal, principal, adjunct college professor and mayor. All these experiences, and the interactions that I have had with so many exceptional leaders and people, have prepared me well for the challenges of leading an urban district during challenging economic times.

As a former special education teacher, I had the joy of working with students with emotional, intellectual, and learning challenges. These students taught me that not all students learn the same way, but that all students can learn at high levels. The most important lesson I learned was to not take it personally and that every day is a new day. As an assistant principal at Berlin High School, I had an opportunity to create student support programs and assist and evaluate teachers. As principal of Cromwell High School, I helped launch numerous student support programs to assure that all students were provided with the support they needed to experience success.

As Superintendent of the Meriden Public Schools, we have launched full day kindergarten for all students, three expanded learning time schools, credit recovery programs, Saturday enrichment academies, and one to one mobile device programs at our high schools. We have a great partnership with our unions and together we have built a collaborative team with a singular focus of putting the students at the center of all of our decisions.

So why serve on the SERC Board? I can assure you that it wasn't that I was bored and needed one additional responsibility. I wanted to serve on the SERC Board because I believe SERC and their experienced team can provide the support that school districts, students, and families are looking for. I also believe strongly in their founding principles of integrity and excellence.

As a lifelong educator with experience in special education, building leadership, and district leadership, my experiences match well to SERC's mission and I believe I can be a good resource to the SERC team. I thank you for your time and consideration of my nomination.

Sincerely,

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