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From: acificon@aol.com
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To: GAETestimony
Subject: Non Partisan Boards of Education

**PRESENTATION TO
THE LEGISLATURE'S GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
1:00 PM, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2015
ROOM 2A, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT**

Hello. My name is Philip J. Dwyer. I am a member of the Board of Education in Fairfield, CT. In addition I have been an active member of the Democratic Town Committee and elected to public office in Pennsylvania, New York and Connecticut. I wish to lend my support of HB 6748 AAC Nonpartisan Membership On Boards Of Education.

I have, in the past, served as a member of the Rye, NY Board of Education where we were elected on a non-partisan basis. Thus, I have experienced Board of Education activities from both partisan and non-partisan perspectives.

I support this bill because it effectively adds to "local control" of our public education system. The proposal would change state statute and provide towns with the choice, should they so decide, to conduct a Board of Education election process that is void of party affiliation. This is not a mandate and does not require funding, it merely provides towns the choice to decide for themselves if the election process for Board of Education members should remain partisan-based or be changed to a non-partisan process.

As it stands today Board of Education candidates in Connecticut are, with rare exception, placed on the municipal ballot because of the decision of a town's political nominating process.

Allowing local towns to debate, and decide for themselves, what is in the best interests of their children would, in my mind:

- Encourage "non political people" to consider running for a local Board of Education. Many great people simply do not want to be engaged in partisan politics. While I find my participation in the election process it helpful on many fronts, when it comes to public education, this can be a deterrent.
- In Rye, NY we never asked the question about how a decision may, or may not, have a political impact. While that specific question is not asked in Fairfield, one needs only to look at voting patterns to discover that party affiliation does have an impact.
- By personal experience I have seen members of a Board of Education elected because of their party affiliation rather than their qualifications. Minority representation by political party can thwart the intentions of the voting public.
- Boards of Education are frequently thought of as an "entry point" to other political offices. This should not be. It should be considered a civic duty to serve the best interests of children, not be a stepping stone for the benefit of a political party or an individual.

Connecticut was, and is a leader in advancing the cause of public education. It is a wonder that we would be one of the last states to allow local communities to decide in favor of non-partisan elections of Boards of Education. The challenges facing public education today require the best, most community-minded