

Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary & Secondary Education
Public Hearing
March 3rd, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to offer you my testimony today.

My name is Joanne Huber and I live in Stonington, CT. I'm writing on behalf of the Learn Magnet Schools in Southeastern, CT. Learn serves 21 school districts, but I'm here to talk about one specific school within Learn -- The Regional Multicultural Magnet School (also known as RMMS). I have worked at RMMS, located in New London, for 13 years; 8 of those have been as a classroom teacher. My daughter graduated from RMMS in 2011; she spent 6 awesome years in the bilingual immersion program there. She is currently a freshman at the Norwich Free Academy and received highest honors on her first progress report. This is a testament to the rigorous academic education that she received at RMMS.

I would like to see the a funding formula established and the transportation grant reimbursement increased for *non-Sheff* magnet schools in Southeastern Connecticut. In my daughter's case, transportation to RMMS was not an issue. I know for a fact, however, that this is absolutely not the case for many other families. I've spoken to parents who have reluctantly admitted that they wouldn't be able to continue to send their child to RMMS if transportation weren't provided. Many of our sending districts are up to 30 minutes away -- that's long enough to cause real transportation hardships for families, but this mix of students is vital to the desegregation commitment of CT magnet schools.

As a teacher, I have directly experienced the effect of frozen funding: when the budget is frozen, our salaries are on the table; class sizes continue to increase; support staff are spread out over more classes and given increasing responsibilities; and, the innovative programs we've been known to implement are now subject to funding based on grants provided by outside organizations.

Our RMMS magnet theme is what brought me to the school -- initially to work and then to provide my daughter's education. Our mission states: *RMMS is committed to respecting cultural diversity, empowering all learners, and developing compassionate people who take responsibility for making positive changes in our society.* Teaching these values is the whole point of the creation of magnet schools in our state to begin with, and RMMS has been doing just that for over two decades!

I am ridiculously proud of my daughter! The Regional Multicultural Magnet School played a vital role in who she has become: a smart, confident, and empathetic young woman who is comfortable standing up for what she believes is right.

I find it ironic that RMMS is labeled a *non-Sheff* school. We were formed in 1991 response to Governor Weicker's (WIKER'S) proposed referenda in every region of the state to address de facto segregation. Southeastern CT was the only region to vote to take decisive action with the creation of RMMS. The way I see it, WE are THE Sheff Magnet school and deserve to be funded fairly. Without establishing a funding formula and increasing the transportation grant reimbursement, RMMS , and other *non-Sheff* magnet schools in Southeastern, CT, are not sustainable. Thank you for your time and attention!