

Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary & Secondary Education  
Public Hearing  
March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015  
Testimony Submitted by Gregory Person of New Britain, CT

Thank you Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Greg Person and I am from New Britain.

For the past five years I have served as a middle school social studies teacher in the CREC magnet school system. During my tenure at both the Metropolitan Learning Center in Bloomfield and the Medical Professions and Teacher Preparation Academy in New Britain I have born witness to the many unique and critical advantages that magnet schools have to offer the students of CT. Before I delve into these advantages, I would like to take a moment to explain my own experience with primary and secondary education.

As a resident of Burlington, CT, I attended the Region #10 public schools. I graduated from Lewis S. Mills High School in 2005. I do not mean in any way to disparage the education that I received. However, I do feel that Region #10 exemplifies the urgent need for magnet schools. In the year that I graduated 96.6% of the student population at Lewis Mills was white.<sup>1</sup> Fast forward ten years to the present and the most recent data indicates that 93% of the student population is white.<sup>2</sup> Region #10, like many school districts throughout our state, continues to be segregated across racial lines. Furthermore, it is clear that this issue is not being resolved on its own.

The CREC magnet school district for which I now teach was born out of the movement to integrate our public school system. It is a model that has had tremendous success due to a strong commitment to provide a quality education to all students, regardless of race. At Lewis S. Mills High School I undoubtedly received a quality education. However, the blatant lack of diversity worked to my detriment. No matter how masterful my teachers were at their craft, there was a gaping hole in my education that simply could not be filled in a segregated setting.

Students at CREC magnet schools are afforded the opportunity to learn and grow in a truly integrated setting. They collaborate, compete, and build friendships with peers of many different backgrounds. I have seen in my own classroom how this diverse educational environment fosters open-mindedness, compassion, and understanding in the minds and hearts of young people.

To best serve the interests of the children of CT, it is imperative that magnet schools continue to grow. One of my main goals as an educator is to aid students in the process of becoming well-informed, critically-thinking, and justice-oriented citizens. I can think of no better way to work towards this goal than to continue to provide an integrated educational environment through the magnet school system.

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<sup>1</sup> CT State Department of Education, Strategic School Profile, Lewis S. Mills, 2004-2005.

<sup>2</sup> CT State Department of Education, Strategic School Profile, Lewis S. Mills, 2012-2013.