

RE: HB 5174

Public Hearing: Government, Administration & Election Committee

LOB, Wednesday, February 25, 2015

Testifying, Joseph O. Ierna, Member of the Board of Director's, Petit Family Foundation

My name is Joseph Ierna and I speak in favor of HB5174, An Act Establishing a Children's State Flower that would designate the Four O'clock flower as the official Connecticut children's state flower.

This all began shortly after the terrible tragedy that occurred on July 24th, 2007 in Cheshire when Dr William Petit lost his wife Jennifer and his two beautiful daughters Hayley and Micaela to a home invasion. Dr. Petit went back to salvage a few personal belongings at his fire damaged home and recovered a few Four O'clock flowers that were the favorite of his 11 year old daughter, Michaela. He replanted these flowers at the home of his parents and grew them back to health and with the inspiration of his late brother-in-law, Dennis Chapman, developed the idea of growing and perpetuating those flowers in memory of Michaela.

From these few seeds hundreds of flower has been grown and thousands of seeds have been hand-picked, packaged and distributed to every state in this country including Alaska .Members from the community, many individuals and organizations throughout Connecticut, **all volunteers** involved.

It starts with the Plainville Senior Center where once a year senior's package all the thousands of seeds gathered throughout Connecticut in Agro-Science schools in Glastonbury, Killingly, Woodbury, Suffield and South Windsor, the Connecticut Science Center Garden and private gardens. Teachers, students, librarians, in community gardens, and commercial growers—all volunteers ultimately help create the packet that raises additional funding that is then distributed through the Petit Foundation to organizations that are seeking grants to fulfill their mission. This cycle happens every year and every year the number of seeds grows and grows.

The mission of the Petit Family Foundation is, "...to honor the memories of Jennifer Hawk-Petit, Hayley Elizabeth Petit and Michaela Rose Petit by continuing the kindness, idealism and activism that defined their lives. The Foundation's funds are given to foster the education of young people, especially women in sciences, to improve the lives of those affected by chronic illnesses, and to support efforts to protect and help those affected by violence".

Michaela Rose Petit loved her Four O'clock flowers and they now bloom throughout this country but have a special place here in Connecticut. What a wonderful way to memorialize an 11 year child and exemplify the good that came from a tragedy that took her away. Please support this flower as the State of Connecticut official children's flower. Thank you