

**Testimony for Public Hearing  
Government Administration and Elections Committee  
February 25, 2015**

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30 Hopkins Drive  
New Haven, CT 06512

Proposed H.B. No. 5174 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CHILDREN'S STATE FLOWER.

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is MaryEllen Farrell. I am an elementary school physical education teacher and co-founder of the Lincoln School Green Team, an environmental awareness club, in New Britain Connecticut. I am here today to voice my support for House Bill number 5174. Students at our weekly Green Team meetings participate in activities that educate them about their impact on the environment, such as recycling paper, germinating seeds, and researching ways to reduce food waste. In the spring of 2014, New Britain Mayor Erin Stewart allocated a plot of land in Walnut Hill Park as a site for Michaela's Garden and reached out to our Green Team to help. We had the distinct honor of helping to plant Michaela's Garden at Walnut Hill and later harvest seeds from the four o'clock plants in the fall. As fellow gardeners, we are proud to share in Michaela's vision to make the world a better place. The most amazing aspect of Michaela's Garden is how it has spread from a single seed in Cheshire to nine gardens currently located throughout the state. The spread of Michaela's Garden is analogous to the life cycle of the four o'clock plant: taking root in our hearts and community, providing comfort to those who behold it even in darkness, and adding beauty to life wherever it blooms. It is never without a life force even when dormant. I cannot think of a better way to honor the memory of Michaela and the optimism of children than to have her beloved four o'clock be named Connecticut Children's state flower. Alive forever in our hearts and in our gardens.

Thank you for your consideration,

MaryEllen Farrell