

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Testimony of Francesca Ford
CTHSS English Teacher, Emmett O'Brien THS
Public Hearing on Secondary Education
Appropriations Committee
February 16, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the committee:

My name is Francesca Ford, and I have been teaching English at Emmett O'Brien High School in Ansonia for the past ten years. In that time, I have seen tremendous growth in our system. My school is undergoing extensive and much-needed renovations, and the Valley will soon have a technical education facility of which they will be very proud. I have seen increased rigor and, as importantly, increased support for students in their academic curriculum. I have seen an increasing number of students graduate career and college ready. Today, though, I am concerned that this progress will be undermined by the Governor's budget. It is not only the cuts in funding, though this school year we have already seen over \$1.5 million cut from the budget approved for us by the legislature, that concerns me. It is also the movement of the CTHSS from its own line item to part of SDE's Consolidated Operating Fund.

In Governor Malloy's State of the State Address, one of the five budget principles he identified was accountability. The move of the CTHSS into the SDE block grant, and indeed all of movement from line-item to block grant funding, in fact reduces accountability. As a parent and an educator, I hold my elective representatives accountable for the votes they take. I believe that as elected officials, you welcome that responsibility. To shift the responsibility for line-item decisions from the elected legislature to appointed managers does not increase accountability, it diffuses it. If I discover that there are further cuts to the CTHSS, cuts that will leave even more unfilled positions in the teaching staff and leave more students with substitutes rather than certified teachers, who would I contact? My legislators would not have the ability to vote on the line item the following year. The Commissioner reports directly to the Governor, not directly to the voters. This change for the CTHSS, and the entire movement to block grant funding, is not only unwise. It is undemocratic. I ask you to reject the Governor's proposal for the CTHSS and block grant funding in general.

Thank you