

To honored members of the Education Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a resident and constituent of Senator Andrew Fleischmann's district and upon the advice of Leslie, his assistant.

I telephoned Senator Fleischmann's office today **to express my deep concern with Senate Bill # 378 - High School Graduation Requirements.**

I take great pride in an ongoing 38-year career in public school Arts Education, along with my involvement with several state & national arts organizations. I am so grateful for the importance & significance of sharing and educating thousands of students and families over time while observing the value of their arts education and its impacts on their lives. After all, without the arts being part of our students' lives, now & in the future, imagine a life without culture?

I am concerned specifically in the dramatic increase in required credits in the Humanities, and particularly in STEM. This would reduce students' flexibility in course selection, putting more demands on their already tight schedules to meet requirements. Not only does it reduce flexibility, but would not allow students to select more than one arts course for their schedule at a time, i.e., participate in the school Band and/or Choir AND select a visual arts, dance and/or theater class. Additionally, it would not permit a student who wants to take more than one course in a specific Arts discipline at a time. It would squeeze students' schedules so that they could not participate in arts classes for four years, as many students currently do and NEED to do if they are planning to continue advancing in a particular arts discipline upon post high school college and/or career.

As a result, it could dramatically impact district staffing, causing districts to almost double staffing in STEM subjects that are already teacher shortage areas and reduce staffing in the arts and other elective areas.

Therefore, I would like to recommend the following:

1. Humanities requirements be maintained at their current level of 7 credits.
2. If STEM credits must be increased, increase STEM requirements no more than 2 credits from the current 5 credit requirement.
3. Ensure that technology-based arts courses, such as Digital Design, Digital Art, Digital Animation, Digital Music Studio, Video Production and Digital Music Composition be identified equally as STEM courses for STEM credit. (In fact, the new National Core Arts Standards have introduced Media Arts as a fifth Arts Discipline for all students, Pre-K – 12)
4. Increase Connecticut's new arts graduation requirement to 2 credits as was originally proposed by our State Department of Education. (This is currently in place in Washington state)
5. Appoint a representative from our key arts professional associations (CT Art Education Association, CT Music Educators Association, CT Arts Administrators Association) to serve on

the High School Graduation Requirements Council as representatives of core subjects as defined by the new federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA.

We must commit to requiring and providing our students with the core curriculum, which includes the Arts and entrust their education to create a quality of life for our future generations that make life and communities vital, while they become creators, providers and consumers of the arts, thus sustaining and enduring our American culture.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Sincerely,  
Jill A. Goldberg  
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