Written Testimony of Clare Neseralla

Dear Appropriations Committee,

I am writing to encourage support for House Bill 7109, which would provide 5% more funding for all magnet schools. I am a teacher at CREC Discovery Academy; I live in West Hartford, CT at 21 Sedgwick Rd. I worked in West Hartford Public Schools for sixteen years and moved to CREC Discovery Academy four years ago. I am impressed at the quality of education offered at CREC and the incredible achievement I have seen in my highly diversified school. As a STEM Coach, I support teachers and students in science lessons, technology integration, engineering application, and math curriculum as well as math intervention for struggling students. My school has a high minority population and 48% of our students receive free or reduced lunch. Our students come from 35 towns and close to 1/2 of our students are from the inner city. We have a rigorous curriculum and high standards. Discovery Academy students make incredible gains and outperform many districts with smaller minority populations. Students are learning about engineering principles, coding as young as 5 years old, and learning about the foundations of robotics in preschool. Our 4th and 5th graders are learning about Changemaking and working on local, statewide, national and worldwide problems. We are showing students how academics are integrated and building a foundation for success in the upper grades. I have seen how offering high standards education in a theme focused school makes an impact.

My passion has been to help students be effective citizens and give them tools and opportunities to experience learning the real world. I have worked in education for 18 years and prior to teaching I was in the business sector 20 years in multimedia and computer marketing. I taught 5th and 3rd grade in West Hartford and recently left the classroom to work for CREC. I have represented the State of Connecticut in Washington D.C. as a John McCormack award winner. I have traveled to Brazil to visit schools in a national global education study and went to Japan with the Fulbright memorial scholarship to tour Japanese schools. Discovery Academy has over 30 countries represented by 1st generation families. I can tell you first hand that the Connecticut schools I have work in are teaching children to be global citizens able to solve real problems.
All students can excel given a high quality educational settings and high quality teachers. In my four years at CREC I have seen support staff let go, summer school cut, a CREC High School closed and tightened budgets. My responsibility of purchasing science and math supplies for all of our teachers gets trickier every year. Magnet school funding per student has not changed for schools in the Hartford region since 2010-11. Assuming the governor’s recommended funding of ECS is adopted, between FY2011 and next year, ECS/Alliance funding will have grown by 7.66% or $145 million.

Please support public education by supporting an increase in education funding in our magnet schools. Our schools need to be funded to continue the important work we do. The opportunity to work in a CREC school that brought inner city and suburban students together was a dream opportunity for me. Daily, I watch student be pushed to their true potential and our test scores show that students can succeed, and the achievement gap can be closed, with the right environment.

Please give consideration to increasing the funding for magnet schools so we can give our students the learning environment they deserve.

I would be more than happy to share my experience with you any time. You can contact me at (860) 833-3194 or cneseralla@crec.org

Sincerely,

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