

CAS REMARKS BEFORE THE CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
June 6, 2007

MY NAME IS MICHAEL SAVAGE AND AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS I COME BEFORE YOU REPRESENTING APPROXIMATELY 1000 SCHOOLS AND , MORE SPECIFICALLY THE PRINCIPALS WHO LEAD THOSE SCHOOLS. I WISH TO THANK YOU - AND IN PARTICULAR COMMISSIONER MCQUILLAN - FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR TODAY AS A KEY STAKEHOLDER AND PROVIDE YOU INPUT ON THE COMMISSIONER'S DESIRE TO DEVELOP A LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL FOR SUBMISSION TO THE 2008 GENERAL ASSEMBLY. A PROPOSAL THAT WOULD SUPPORT A COMPETENCY EXAMINATION REQUIREMENT AS A PREREQUISITE FOR A CONNECTICUT HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA. I WISH TO MAKE FOUR (4) VERY BRIEF - YET VERY IMPORTANT POINTS - ON BEHALF OF THE CONNECTICUT HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND TURN OVER THE REST OF MY TIME TO ROBERT PITOCCHO, PRINCIPAL OF ROCKY HILL HIGH SCHOOL, A RECENT RECIPIENT OF THE CONNECTICUT PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR AWARD.

- 1. THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS WISH TO GO ON RECORD WITH THE SBE STATING THEIR DESIRE TO PLAY A MAJOR PART IN ANY FUTURE "CONVERSATIONS" CENTERED ON ANY NEW PREREQUISITES FOR GRADUATION OR GRADUATION COMPETENCY EXAMINATIONS REQUIREMENTS.**

- 2. THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS OF THIS STATE HAVE AND CONTINUE TO FULLY SUPPORT STRONG ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS, INCLUDING THOSE THAT ARE MANDATED BY NCLB AND THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT AS SET FORTH UNDER P.A. 165. THEY BELIEVE THAT ALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO MEET RIGOROUS STANDARDS IN FULFILLING THEIR INDIVIDUALLY DESIGNED COURSES OF STUDY.**

- 3. THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS APPLAUD YOU, THE CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, FOR MAKING HIGH SCHOOL REFORM ONE OF ITS TOP THREE GOALS THIS YEAR. WE NEED TO MOVE FORWARD WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY ON THIS FRONT. WE BELIEVE COMPETENCY EXAMINATIONS, EXIT EXAMS, AND/OR GRADUATION STANDARDS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED WITHIN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF REFORM AND NOT IN ISOLATION. HIGH SCHOOL REFORM WILL, IF PROPERLY IMPLEMENTED WITH APPROPRIATE FUNDING, INCREASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES, ADEQUATE STAFFING AND ENERGIZED AND TALENTED BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS, IN ITSELF, BOOST HIGHER STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.**

4. AND PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE. THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS OF THIS STATE BELIEVE THAT ALL STUDENTS DESERVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECEIVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA WHEN THEY HAVE FULLY AND SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED A LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY THROUGH A PROGRAM OF STUDIES DETERMINED BY THE LOCAL DISTRICT TO BE APPROPRIATE TO THE NEEDS AND APTITUDES OF THOSE STUDENTS. WE ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED WITH NEW ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS PROPOSED BY THE STATE THAT WILL NOT PROPERLY SUPPORT THE 20.1% OF OUR STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT MET, AND FOR MANY, DESPITE THEIR BEST EFFORTS, WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO MEET THOSE STANDARDS OF RIGOR. AND YET, THROUGH THEIR BEST EFFORTS WILL HAVE SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED THE GOALS ESTABLISHED FOR THEM AT THE LOCAL DISTRICT. STATE STANDARDS NEED TO BE DESIGNED, AS IS SUGGESTED BY ONE OF YOUR VERY OWN BOARD MEMBERS, DR. JAY VOSS, WITH THE FLEXIBILITY TO ALLOW LOCAL DISTRICTS TO SERVE THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF THEIR STUDENTS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ALLOWING THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT TO CONTINUE SERVING THE GREATER GOOD. WE BELIEVE THAT RIGOROUS STATE GRADUATION STANDARDS CAN BE DESIGNED TO WORK IN HARMONY WITH WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT KIDS - KIDS WITH DIFFERENT APTITUDES AND LEARNING STYLES, WITH DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONS, INTERESTS, STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES. WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO DEVELOP THOSE ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES THAT ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL STUDENT NEEDS IN A WAY THAT MAINTAINS THE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF THE STATE BUT ALSO ENABLES THE STUDENTS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR COMPETENCY IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. AND LASTLY, WE MUST ALSO MAKE SURE THAT HIGH STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY LEADS TO MEANINGFUL SOLUTIONS FOR OUR MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS, NOT JUST MORE PUNISHMENT FOR OUR MOST TROUBLED SCHOOLS.