

House Education Committee
Teacher Preparation Follow-Up Hearing
November 13, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Dennis Tulli, CEO of Commonwealth Connections Academy, a Pennsylvania cyber charter school. Our school is a k through 12 public school employing over 100 teachers across the state. Over the past five years our enrollment has grown from 400 students in 2003 to over 3000 students today.

Prior to becoming CEO at Commonwealth, I served as superintendent of the Lebanon city school district. Between 2003 and 2005 I taught classes at Lebanon Valley College as a visiting assistant professor. I am a graduate of Lebanon Valley College; I hold a master's degree from Shippensburg University and an ED.D. from Temple. I have been directly involved in the teacher hiring process since 1984 at three different Pennsylvania school districts.

I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you this morning. It could be argued that the hiring process is the most important job of a school administrator. We are in the people business and good people, good teachers, assistants... make good schools. When we recruit, screen, interview and select we use a complex process which we hope yields the best employees for our school. Based on our track record of success I would say we have a solid process in place.

As we screen applicants we are always looking for candidates who have been good students, who possess special talents and have demonstrated a sincere interest in the teaching profession. We have hired many teachers from the Pennsylvania state university system. We have also employed numerous teachers who were graduates of Lebanon Valley, Albright, Juniata, Lycoming, and many other private colleges in Pennsylvania. I can provide specific examples of programs provided by private colleges that have met our needs over the years-LVC program and Juniata science program to name two. It would be a loss to the Commonwealth if some programs were dropped because of these requirements.

We have found these candidates to be very well prepared for the challenges of public school teaching. The benefits of a well-rounded liberal arts education are clear. We have enjoyed the academic diversity they bring to our faculty. The graduates of these institutions are well trained and fully certified. They blend nicely with those who we have hired from the public college environment. The richness of the private school experience brought to our schools by these teachers helps us to create a stronger and more fulfilling academic instructional program. I am hopeful that we can continue to hire teachers who are the products of public and private colleges at our schools.

I would be happy to answer questions if there are any.