

**Testimony of Cheryl Ritacco, RE Governor's Bill 874  
An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut  
Cheryl Ritacco  
NFA Corporator, Alumna, and Donor]  
March 1, 2019**

Senator Looney, Senator Duff, Representative Aresimowicz, Representative Ritter and distinguished members of the Education Committee.

*I vigorously oppose the provisions of Governor's Bill 874 which apply to Connecticut's independently governed, endowed academies; specifically, §9(b), pp. 13-14.*

**Each incorporated or endowed high school or academy approved by the State Board of Education shall be operated by a governing board. The membership of such governing board shall include, but need not be limited to, a representative selected by each local or regional board of education that sends more than fifty students to such incorporated or endowed high school or academy. Such representative may be the superintendent of schools employed by such board of education.**

As a lifelong Norwich resident and a major donor and Corporator of Norwich Free Academy (NFA), I must implore you to REJECT §9(b), pp. 13-14, Governor's Bill 874.

I know firsthand the value of an NFA education. I am a 1981 graduate of NFA, and my husband and two children also attended NFA. I continue to provide both time and monetary support to the school that means so much to my family and me.

During a time when public school budgets are facing cutback after cutback, NFA's unwavering commitment to independence has allowed the school to continue offering a robust selection of courses and programs to students.

I donate to NFA because I have complete confidence and trust in their 165-year model of independence, a model that was chosen because it would allow the school to educate our region's youth, free from the challenges and pressures of political forces and special interests. If NFA's independence is jeopardized, it will have a devastating effect on the school's Foundation and donor support. A decrease in donor support from alumni will, ultimately, reduce the programs and increase costs to partners.

I believe in the institution's unique ability to prepare its students for the challenges of the future and help them become resourceful members of their communities. I urge you to please consider the damaging impact that passage of this bill would have on the children and families who benefit from NFA's independent education experience.

Sincerely,  
Cheryl Ritacco