

# The Connecticut General Assembly

## House Democrats



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MEMBER  
COMMERCE COMMITTEE  
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE  
INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE

February 28, 2008

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to ask that you support **AAC Municipal Bonding for the Purpose of Creating a Higher Education Fund (Connecticut Promise Zones)**. This piece of legislation is modeled after the successful Kalamazoo Promise in Michigan. My proposal, which has been raised by the Connecticut General Assembly's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee and adopted by the Legislature's Black and Latino Caucus, would allow a municipality to bond for the purposes of establishing a fund structured in a similar way to the Kalamazoo Promise. It is important to note that this proposal would be an option for municipalities and would not burden the municipality with any liability that they would not themselves choose.

Although the goal of the program is quite simply to ensure a college (public university, college and community college) education to all qualified students within the municipality, the impact has been proven to be much greater. (See attached fact sheet). The impact that this piece of legislation could have on a participating municipality would be quite significant.

Although a hearing date has not been confirmed by the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, it is my understanding that the tentative date is March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008. I ask that you please consider attending this hearing and supporting this important piece of legislation. I will follow-up with your office when a date is confirmed by the Committee.

Based on the Kalamazoo results listed on the fact sheet, I cannot stress how important this bill, if enacted into law, would be for our municipalities.

Please feel free to contact me directly at 860-240-8585, or my cell phone, 860-810-4365 or via e-mail at [Kelvin.Roldan@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Kelvin.Roldan@cga.ct.gov) to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Kelvin Roldán

## **Connecticut Promise Zones**

### **“AAC Municipal Bonding for the Purpose of Creating a Higher Education Fund”**

#### **Background**

In November 2005 Kalamazoo, MI, established the Kalamazoo Promise, an unrestricted scholarship program that guarantees the full college scholarship to every graduate of the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS), approximately 10,500 students. The program differs from others in that the scholarship is not merit based.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

In order to become an eligible participant in a Connecticut municipality, a student must:

1. reside in the school district, have been a student for at least four years, and graduate from the district (enrollment and residency must be continuous);
2. be admitted to and enrolled at any Connecticut public university or community college; and
3. make regular progress toward a degree or certification, complete a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester, and maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) (students may be reinstated to the program if they raise their GPA back to a 2.0)

The post-secondary education must be completed within ten years of high school graduation (with exceptions for military service).

#### **How would it work?**

- The scholarship covers up to four years of tuition and mandatory fees;
- Students who attend the participating municipality for only the four years of high school receive 65% of their tuition;
- The percentage goes up by five (5) points for each additional year of attendance, down to fourth grade;
- Students that have attended the participating district from first, second, or third grade through graduation receive 95% of their tuition; and
- Students that have attended from kindergarten through grade 12 receive 100%.

#### **Proven Impact in Kalamazoo**

- **Reverse in enrollment decline of Kalamazoo Public Schools and racial and socio-economic diversification of the student body; 11% increase in student enrollment after many years of decline**
- **About 1,300 new students from 32 states and nine foreign countries registered in Kalamazoo public schools since the first scholarships were handed out in 2006 — the largest enrollment increase in 35 years**
- **White student enrollment rose by 250, the first upsurge since the 1980s**
- **43 percent rise in the graduation rate among African Americans**
- **500 students who would have dropped out in a typical year stayed in school instead**
- **About 600 Promise students attend college today**
- **Increased graduation rates by at least 16% and by over 40% for African-Americans**

- **Increased percentage of Kalamazoo graduates applying to college by 7%, a figure which will grow with every coming year as newly enrolled Promise students continue to graduate in greater numbers**
- **Home sales rose 6 percent after the Promise was launched, as the region around Kalamazoo experienced a 10 percent decline.**
- **Home prices rose 3.6 percent, compared with a 1.4 percent drop regionally**
- **Home values rose 7% overall**
- **200 housing units have gone up since 2006 and another 400 are on the way**
- **Helps city retain and attract new businesses**
- **Potential for increase course offerings and efforts to close the achievement gap**
- **Create a better educated workforce**
- **Reduce the cost of higher education for residents**