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Maureen O'Brien

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75 PLEASANT STREET
MALDEN, MA 02148

Candidate for History and Social Science Content Specialist

Dear Ms. O'Brien,

In 2004, as a City Year Boston Corps Member, I was assigned to support Dr. Meira Levinson in teaching the 8th grade "Civics in Action" curriculum that was being piloted in the Boston Public Schools. At the core of that curriculum were student-led projects similar to what is outlined in the "Civics Project Guidebook". Through these projects, our students accomplished so much: they created and distributed pamphlets about the impacts of community violence, sent school supplies to children in Iraq, and lobbied for additional after-school programs in their neighborhoods. Supporting these students as they completed these projects and learned to take civic action in their communities was an incredible experience and it would be a great honor to support teachers in the Commonwealth as they implement similarly powerful and transformative civics projects.

Since leaving my position as Research Scientist at Landmark College in June, I have been teaching as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Connecticut and working to complete my doctoral dissertation. I have also been providing full-time care for my 5 year-old son and volunteering in support of a massive renovation of his non-profit preschool: Willow Blossom Learning Center. In my role as Board President, I have collaborated with the Center Director and staff to upgrade the building's HVAC systems, re-design classrooms, and secure the funding needed for these renovations. I have also volunteered hundreds of hours to complete the carpentry and painting necessary to create a safer and more functional space for the Program. I share this with you because my efforts at Willow Blossom are indicative of the diligence and dedication I bring to all of my work. As we plan to re-open the Center next week, and my son is off to kindergarten in the Fall, I am currently seeking a position that allows us to move closer to our family in the Boston area and affords me the opportunity to apply my skills as a teacher educator.

I believe that my experience as a teacher educator and classroom teacher would make me an asset to the Office of Literacy and Humanities and educators in the Commonwealth. Much of my scholarly work has been focused on "disciplinary literacy": an approach to adolescent literacy instruction that focuses on engaging students in the literate practices of disciplinary experts (including Historians and Social Scientists). As a Graduate Assistant and Adjunct Professor at the University of Connecticut, I have applied these ideas to courses on literacy instruction in the content areas. In these courses, I have helped over 200 pre-service History and Social Studies teachers design engaging and powerful instruction for middle and high school students. Lastly, the bulk of my classroom teaching experience was with students with learning differences such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia. I believe my experience applying universal design principles to my own teaching would allow me to help teachers in Massachusetts deliver instruction that is accessible to all students.

I am an experienced and committed educator and teacher educator, and I would greatly appreciate the op-

portunity to discuss my qualifications with you in an interview. Further, I would love to learn more about the plans and vision for implementing Social Studies and Civics Instruction in the Commonwealth. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Christopher Wenz