



Connecticut **Business & Industry** Assoc

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker: *Lauren Kaufman*

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Testimony of
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Education Committee
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Good Afternoon. My name is Lauren Weisberg Kaufman and I am a Vice President with the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and Executive Director of the CBIA Education Foundation. CBIA represents approximately 10,000 companies across the state of Connecticut, ranging from large corporations to small businesses in virtually every industry.

I am here today to testify on several bills related to educational quality, higher standards, increased accountability and significant improvement in the performance of students in urban schools. The business community is very concerned about the quality of education in Connecticut and supports the efforts to raise academic standards reflected in **SB 1410, An Act Concerning High School Curriculum and Graduation Requirements Reform**. Although we have some of the finest schools in the country in this state, we know that the achievement gap between the majority of our high performing schools and our schools that serve predominately low income and minority students is growing and must be reversed immediately. We do have isolated examples of high performing schools in Connecticut's urban districts, be they traditional public, charter or magnet schools, so we see before our eyes, schools that defy the culture of low expectations that pervades far too many classrooms.

Vanguard Schools that outperform their peers start with high expectations, high standards, strong leadership, a clear vision and mission, and good if not great teachers. They work with students where they are and provide supports, such as planning time for teachers, more time for student learning, (through longer days, Saturday classes and extended school calendars), more engaging curriculum, mentors, tutors and parent outreach, all research based proven strategies that get results.

Raising standards for graduation does not mean that we will automatically raise the drop-out rate, but it does mean that extra attention must be paid to putting in place pre-school, school and after school programs that address the needs of students. It means more flexibility in the school day and school year, and more opportunities for high school students to participate in job shadowing, company visits and internships. Our work over

the last 20 years with urban students has convinced us that the majority of these students need industry role models and mentors and opportunities to clearly see and understand why they must study a rigorous curriculum. They must understand what is in it for them and become engaged and motivated in the educational process, both in school and out of school. Highly successful models exist all over the country. We do not need more research on what works, we need carefully planned and thoughtful initiatives, that put in place what the research on best practices clearly demonstrates works for all kinds of students.

To this end, CBIA also supports the following bills before this committee today:

SB 1405 An Act Concerning Intervention Model for Schools in Need of Improvement and Concerning Urban Education

SB 1408 An Act Concerning Charter Schools

HB 7345 An Act Concerning Great Schools for All

HB An Act Concerning a an Alternate Route to Certification Program for Administrators

These bills all contain components of best practices and provide opportunities to significantly improve public education in the state and change the dismal outcomes we have accepted for far too long in our urban schools. I urge the committee to carefully pick and choose among the best solutions and thinking offered by the advocates of these various solutions and not select a one size fits all approach. We have done that for too many years. We must support strategies and ideas that have demonstrably proven results and ensure that resources and accountability for results go hand in hand.

The business community stands ready to support educational reforms that work, but remains skeptical that increased resources will result in improved performance, if proper accountability measures are not put in place. We look forward to working with you in the coming months on this critical issue and hope that business involvement and oversight will be a part of any solutions you ultimately put forward.

Thank you.