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Representative Diana Urban
Education Committee Public Hearing
March 10, 2008
Testimony on SB-649

Good afternoon and for the record I am Diana Urban State rep for the 43rd district

Recently the Appropriations Committee held a hearing based on our continuing work on RBA which is overseen by the Results Based Accountability Sub-Committee of the Appropriations Committee of which I am the house Chair. The hearing was to examine the templates, data sets and trend lines produced from a RBA based examination of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet's progress towards the two Population Quality of Life Results "All children healthy and ready for school success at entry to K" and "All children healthy and achieving school success by age 9"

Within that study is a Performance measure on School Climate. In that measure the Cabinet and SDE pointed out and I quote

" Young Children must be connected to and engaged in their initial years of schooling as a precondition for any level of academic and social success. We cannot yet report a meaningful measure for school climate. The best proxy measure is the number of disciplinary incidents committed among kindergarteners and 3rd graders.

In the 2005-2006 school year, 43,936 kindergartners were enrolled in Connecticut's public schools. SDE data on disciplinary offenses reveal 1,032 instances of inappropriate behavior by kindergarten students during this time"

As many of you are aware, I have been championing the addition of Humane Education to our schools. At the outset I want to remind you that this **IS NOT** a mandate, but a CEU that teachers can then weave into their classroom lessons if they so choose. For the record I would characterize Humane Ed's underlying goal as teaching respect for each other, the animals we share this planet with, and the planet itself. There is ample data to indicate that schools that offer Humane Education have a measurable decrease in disciplinary incidents as well as absenteeism

I would strongly encourage this Committee to add a Section to this bill allowing Humane Education to become a CEU for our teachers with the stated population result of "All children healthy and achieving success by age nine"

Commissioner McQuillan is well versed in RBA and we did discuss this in the Public Hearing of Feb 7th. He would be able to track the results of this policy using a RBA template and report back to this Committee on the success of adding a CEU on Humane Education. Although as it is not a mandate, the data would be teacher by teacher as they chose to incorporate Humane Education.

Endorsements – Connecticut Bar Association’s Animal Law, Victims’ Rights, & Education committees; Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate; Connecticut School for Ethical Education.

✓ **Humane education fosters kindness, critical thinking, and a sense of responsibility in children.** As children learn to treat each other humanely, they become less likely to cause disciplinary problems or engage in childhood or adult violence and more likely to take care of others and the environment. Also, classroom discussions emphasizing empathy and respect can help teachers identify at-risk children requiring early intervention.

✓ **Humane education is cost-effective.** Humane education is easily integrated into existing school curricula, without taking away significant time or resources from other subjects (in fact, fewer disciplinary incidents means more time for instruction). Further, many low-cost or free humane education resources already exist.

✓ **Humane education enhances children’s learning experience.** Children are especially interested in animals and animal-related subjects, making animals superior vehicles for learning. Animals are also uniquely capable of providing children of diverse socio-economic backgrounds and cultural heritages with a common point of reference.

✓ **Many states have already enacted humane education laws.** 13 states have humane education laws, including Maine, New York, and New Jersey.

Probably the best studies to cite are referenced in the NJ Animal Welfare Task Force report:

New Jersey Animal Welfare Task Force Report (2004) review of humane education literature, and in particular, its capacity to influence humane attitudes and development of empathy:

"Studies establish the positive effect achieved through humane education:

- ❖ A study of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals school-based humane education presentations found that a single presentation increased humane attitudes among second-graders, and that a series of three presentations had the same effect on third and fourth-graders. *Ascione, F.R., "Evaluating Efforts to Encourage Children's Kindness and Caring Towards Animals," Genetic, Social and General Psychology Monographs, 123(1), 55-57 (1997).*
- ❖ Two studies demonstrated that students who had classroom programs on humane treatment of animals and empathy scored higher on humane attitude scales than those who did not. *Ascione, F.R., "Enhancing Children's Attitudes About the Humane Treatment of Animals and Empathy: Generalization to Human-Directed Empathy," Anthrozoos, 5(3), 176-91 (1992) and Ascione, F.R. and Weber, C.V., "Children's Attitudes About the Humane Treatment of Animals and Empathy: One-Year Follow-up of a School-Based Intervention," Anthrozoos, 9(4), 188-95 (1996).*
- ❖ An examination of attitude transference indicated that children who were more knowledgeable about and favorably disposed toward animals were more likely to respond with greater empathy to people and have better relationships with peers. *Montminy-Danna, M. & O'Hare, T. (2001), Evaluation Report: Effectiveness of the Potter League Humane Education Program, Potter League for Animals, Middletown, R.I.*
- ❖ Another study's results showed that students receiving environmental action instruction reported engaging in more environmentally responsible actions following a workshop in environmental education than they did prior to the workshop. *Jordan, J.R., Hungerford, H.R., & Tomera, A.N., "Effects of Two Residential Workshops on High School Students," Journal of Environmental Education, 18(1), 15-21 (1986).*

