



TESTIMONY OF  
THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE

FOR THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
REGARDING S.B. 1142

AN ACT CONCERNING RELIEF OF STATE MANDATES ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS

MARCH 23, 2009

This testimony is submitted by Jacqueline Kabak, Policy Fellow at the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (Alliance). The Alliance is a statewide, non-profit organization that works to reduce the number of children and youth entering the juvenile and criminal justice system, and advocates a safe, effective and fair system for those involved.

The Alliance strongly opposes the section of the bill that proposes delaying implementation of the in-school suspension changes until July 1, 2011 (Section 1. Subsection (g) of section 10-233c). There are many misunderstandings of the original legislation, which was intended to prevent the inappropriate out-of-school suspensions.

*Myth:* Schools can never use out-of-school suspensions as part of their disciplinary procedure.

*Fact:* The law states that schools can out-of-school suspend if the pupil poses a danger to persons or property or causes a disruption of the educational process. The discretion is still in the hands of the school leaders.

*Myth:* Schools must create a new in-school suspension program.

*Fact:* Schools do not have to in-school suspend anyone if they do not want to. Schools are not required to create an in-school suspension program at all. An alternative program, like Saturday detention will be perfectly acceptable.

Schools will be free to impose a wide range of disciplinary options, entirely within their discretion. These could take the form of detention, reprimands, withdrawal of privileges, community service and any other method the school deems suitable. It is critical that Connecticut stay on track with the implementation of the "in-school suspension bill" set for July 1, 2009. As the Governor herself said when she signed this legislation into law in 2007:

*"Student learning takes place primarily when students are in school. That is why we need policies like this that keep students in school, not at home. Keeping children out of school is a direct line to delinquent behavior. Students get farther behind in their course work. They lose hope of catching up. It's a recipe for failure."*  
(Governor Rell, June 28, 2007)

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. Should you have any questions or need further information we would be happy to answer them.

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