



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Select Committee on Children
February 5, 2009

**TESTIMONY OF
MARK K. MCQUILLAN, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION**

ON

PROPOSED BILL 5145

**AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION OF STUDENTS
ON THE PREVENTION OF SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME**

The Department of Education does not support the adoption of Proposed Bill 5145, which proposes to require inclusion, in the health curriculum for middle school and high school students, information concerning the prevention of shaken baby syndrome.

While recognizing the importance of the issue, the Department of Education does not support this bill because there are already a number of statutory requirements concerning particular issues to be addressed in the curriculum for health and safety education, e.g., human growth and development, mental and emotional health, etc. (See CGS Section 10-16b) Rather than add to these requirements, the Department believes that the comprehensive approach to school health that it endorses is preferable and already addresses many of the issues related to the prevention of shaken baby syndrome.

A comprehensive approach to school health provides the foundation of knowledge and skill development about the interrelationship of behavior and

health, interactions within the human body and the prevention of diseases and other health and wellness issues. The health curriculum framework that has been prepared by the Department, entitled "Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework," covers many of the content requirements outlined in the curriculum statute concerning health and safety education including, but not limited to, human growth and development; community/environmental health; human sexuality; injury and disease prevention; mental and emotional health; and nutrition and physical activity; and alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. In addition, the curriculum provides skill development in areas such as communication, critical thinking, negotiation, refusal, goal setting and advocacy. Given the breadth of this curriculum framework, the Department believes there is room for schools to incorporate instruction regarding the prevention of shaken baby syndrome without mandating it in the statute. For example, the issue could be addressed when discussing mental and emotional health issues or when working on developing communication skills.

The Department of Education understands that the issue of shaken baby syndrome is an important one, but we do not support adding another legislative mandate to the Health Education course syllabi as it will burden districts and challenge the teachers' ability to balance the allotted instructional time for the existing course requirements.

In light of the above, the Department of Education does not support this bill.