

**Testimony of Margie B. Gillis, Director, Haskins Literacy
Initiative,
in support of House Bill No. 6491,
An Act Concerning Longitudinal Studies of Student
Achievement**

February 23, 2009

I write this testimony in support of HB No. 6491 An Act Concerning Longitudinal Studies of Student Achievement. By authorizing the State Department of Education to release data to a third party for research purposes, we will be able to look at changes in student achievement from year to year and examine the relationships between student achievement and various school curricula. In addition, since there are a number of states that have received awards from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), we will be able to share information with these states about what evidence-based research practices work best for our students.

To be sure, it is challenging at best to conduct rigorous research in schools where intervening variables abound. For example, while it would be tempting to make claims that the practices employed by Haskins-mentored teachers are superior to those who are teaching without the benefit of a mentor steeped in the research, we haven't been able to prove the efficacy of our work. In this age of data-driven accountability, data tools such as the Public School Information System (PSIS), are the key to linking student achievement with teachers, schools, and school programs.

To quote former IES Director, Russ Whitehurst, "longitudinal datasets in education are allowing education researchers to uncover relationships between characteristics of schooling and student outcomes that promise both to enhance the effectiveness of education policies and to inform a new generation of research studies." In addition to the research benefits of this bill, there are many reasons why we should be following our students' performance on high-stakes tests. The PSIS will allow the State Department of Education and third-party organizations to compare the progress of cohorts of students and to conduct more careful analysis of school