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Good Afternoon Mr, Gaffey, Mr. Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Mallory Buckingham and I am the VP for Government Affairs with the CT Speech Language and Hearing Association. (CSHA). I am writing regarding H.B. 5425, An Act Concerning Special Education.

I am concerned about changes proposed to reconstitute the State Advisory Counsel on Special Education, which is detailed in Section 1 (a).

Under the current language, CSHA is recognized as a standing member of the CT State Advisory Counsel for Special Education. The current legislation proposes to reduce from three members to one member the appointments made by the President Pro Tem of the Senate and removes explicit recognition of a CSHA representative on the Counsel.

Although I understand the desire of the Education Committee to reduce the number of members on this counsel, CSHA feels we have a unique role to play and should continue to be included for several reasons. The greatest shortage area in public school personnel is currently Speech-Language Pathologists. CSHA has a good working relationship with the Bureau of Special Education and has played an active role on the Counsel. The role of language ability in a student's regular or special education is central to successful, academic achievement.

Thank you for allowing me to share my position on HB 5425. I hope you will consider leaving the language unchanged, delineating a member from the CT Speech Language Hearing Association as a member on the State Advisory Counsel for Special Education.

Sincerely,

Mallory Buckingham, MS, CCC/SLP