



My name is Alex Johnston, and I am the chief executive officer of ConnCAN, the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now. I am submitting written testimony in opposition to

**RAISED BILL NO. 197: AN ACT CONCERNING IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS**

ConnCAN is building a movement of concerned citizens advocating to fundamentally reform our public schools through smart public policies.

Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the country. Last year's National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the nation's report card, put Connecticut at 50 out of 50 states for the achievement gap between poor and non-poor students in both fourth and eighth grade math, the two grades tested.

Drawing on the lessons learned from great public schools across Connecticut, the insights and experiences of parents and community leaders tackling this challenge, and the latest research on proven policies for raising student achievement from around the country, it is clear that excluding children from school contributes to the achievement gap and high dropout rates. Children cannot learn when they are not in school. Suspended students often miss days at a time, and when they return to school, they are discouraged by how far they have fallen behind. The students most likely to be suspended are those at greatest risk of educational failure.

Increasing instructional time by keeping children in school is one of the most effective ways to improve achievement and reduce disparities. That is why I'm submitting testimony in opposition to Raised Bill 197.