



Connecticut Business & Industry Association

**Testimony of Jesmin K. Basanti
Staff Attorney, CBIA
Before the Committee on Program Review and Investigations
Hartford, CT
March 1, 2010**

H.B. 5165 An Act Concerning High School Graduation Requirements

Good Afternoon Senator Kissel and Representative Mushinsky and other members of the Committee. My name is Jesmin Basanti and I am Staff Attorney for Education matters at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA represents more than 10,000 companies throughout the state of Connecticut, ranging from large corporations to small businesses, but the vast majority of our members are small businesses of fifty or fewer employees.

CBIA has supported legislative efforts aimed at addressing the decline of graduation success rates for several years. The greatest resource that Connecticut has is our educated and skilled workforce and ensuring that they continue to receive the support they need is not only important but necessary.

We appreciate the work that this committee has done to shed light on this very pertinent issue and believe that H.B. 5165 has the potential to be more relevant and beneficial for Connecticut if a few changes are made to the current language.

First, we have "put off for tomorrow what can be done today" for too long. CBIA members are very concerned with the current fiscal situation Connecticut is in and support finding ways to cut excess spending and create a leaner, more efficient state. However, by delaying the graduation requirements reform until 2017 or later, we are only doing a disservice to the people of Connecticut and our future workforce.

Secondly, the requirements stated in subsection (c) are the product of several years of effort by various education advocates and the State Department of Education. Providing students with a more rigorous curriculum will not only help them graduate from high school but would reduce the number of students taking remedial courses in post-secondary institutions.

Furthermore, the applications for the Race To The Top funding for round one are already in and Connecticut has an opportunity to apply again, and win this time, in the second round. High school graduation requirements are a large part of that application and by putting off the reform until 2017 or later, our proposal will not convey the commitment Connecticut has to our much needed education reform.

The time for delay and discussion has long passed, we are now facing a very real threat of losing our people and talent in this state and for these reasons and the reasons stated above, we oppose delaying the graduation requirements until 2017 and respectfully ask that the committee change the proposed language to implement graduation requirements reform now.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond and I would be happy to answer any question you might have.