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Education Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly

**Testimony in favor of H. B. 5421, "An Act Concerning Educators and Administrators."  
Sec. 5**

I wish to testify *for* the changes planned for C.G.S. 10-220a as contained in Section 5 of the raised Bill. I am *for* the proposal to add language to section (7) of 10-220a that will provide emphasis on "scientifically-based reading research models." (217-19). This emphasis is an important addition to the current law to improve reading instruction in Connecticut.

Besides being an attorney, I have my Comprehensive Special Education certification (065) and Intermediate Administration and Supervision certification (092). My experiences in Special Education have focused to a great extent on instruction for students identified with reading disabilities. I am acutely aware that by the time a student with such difficulties enters middle school or high school a great deal of time and effort must be expended by the district to try and ameliorate the difficulties. Addressing a child's reading needs early on through proven methods will reduce the need to expend resources later on.

As we all know too well, a child who is unable to read is going to be limited in fully participating in life's activities as we can continue to evolve into a knowledge based economy. The cost of not addressing the problem of effective reading instruction not only affects the taxpayers but also society at large. Study after study has shown that large percentages of the incarcerated population are not literate. Many argue, correctly I think, that improving the rate of literacy will reduce the rate of incarceration.

Why then the need for a district's instructional staff to receive in-service training in models described in the No Child Left Behind Act? Because NCLB places the focus on those methods that can be shown to work by appropriate examination of claims of efficacy. While NCLB has come under criticism for high stakes testing requirements and stigmatizing schools, one of its real strengths is putting forward the idea that reading is best taught using those approaches that have been vetted through a research based process. In-service training is the one area that districts can continue to make gains in the mainstream classrooms, not just in special education. NCLB stresses that districts need programs where professional development activities involving reading instruction use materials which have been reviewed for theoretical and conceptual claims and assumptions that serve as the foundation for each reading strategy, program, or method of instruction

While the proposed language in Section 5 is refers to kindergarten through third grade, I think it important that all staff in a district have some awareness of researched based models. Teachers beyond the third grade should have some training in scientifically based reading instruction. NCLB suggests that even those who are not involved in direct instruction receive some training in the nature of reading disabilities and how those disabilities can be remedied.

I am of an age that I can remember when someone with an eighth grade education could have a productive life, raise a family, and fully participate in civic life. That time is long gone. This is an excellent time for Connecticut to move forward in the area of reading instruction. More energy is being directed to outcomes that can be measured and replication of efficacious instruction should be at the forefront of our Legislature. I ask the Committee for a favorable vote on the proposed language in Section 5.

Thank you for your time and consideration.