

Connecticut Commission On Educational Achievement



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Education Committee Public Hearing Testimony on Raised Bills 1106, 6500, and 6498

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- My name is Shana Kennedy-Salchow. I want to thank the members of the Education Committee for this opportunity to testify about Raised Bill 1106.
- I served as co-Executive Director of the Connecticut Commission on Educational Achievement, a bi-partisan group of 11 business and philanthropic leaders appointed by former Governor Rell to make recommendations for closing CT's widest in the nation achievement gap.
- Over the course of the Commission, we constantly heard about the importance of early childhood education opportunities in closing the achievement gap- that so many students were showing up at school without the skills they needed to be successful.
- We looked into the issue and found that Early Childhood education existed across several different state agencies and when asked some of the most basic questions, such as, how many low-income kids need access to PK- you could get several different answers. The same was true of quality questions such as – does the teacher have to have an AA? What percent of them do?
- The Commission endorses the establishment of the early childhood education department. We are confident this will bring the efficiency and will allow for both quality control and a quality ratings system that will be beneficial to little students, their parents and the state.
- I would also like to comment on Raised Bill 6500, An Act Concerning Educational Achievement. We are excited to see the requirement of a math assessment for elementary school teacher candidates. As you may know, the state's reading assessment has shed light on the wide range of performance of teacher candidates from our education schools, with several of our largest education schools performing poorly. We look forward to a math component and see both assessments as tools that schools of education can use to ensure they are producing well-prepared teachers.
- Additionally, we fully support section 3 of Raised Bill 6500 - the adoption of a Common Chart of Accounts. During the Commission, we tried desperately to understand how

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schools were funded and what the money actually went for. None of the information we needed was available at the school level and the information at the district level varied so much and had such broad categories, it was nearly useless.

- Research in other states has shown us the tremendous variance in school-level funding with-in districts. It has also shown that the schools serving our low-income students are most-likely to receive less funding because of this system of masked funding.
- Last, I would like to comment on Raised Bill 6498. The Commission feels strongly that the reforms in PA 10.111 need to be initiated as soon as possible, we cannot delay the main provisions in this act. In fact, we found some of the deadlines to be too generous as currently written (such as the data system deadline or the teacher evaluation report from the Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee). With an estimated 45,000 students at the below basic level in reading and/or math, can we really afford to wait? Furthermore, there are 20 states and DC now with college and career ready graduation requirements for all of their students yet this bill proposes waiting even longer before we have the same high expectations for our students. PA 10.111 was a step in the right direction we don't need to go backwards.

