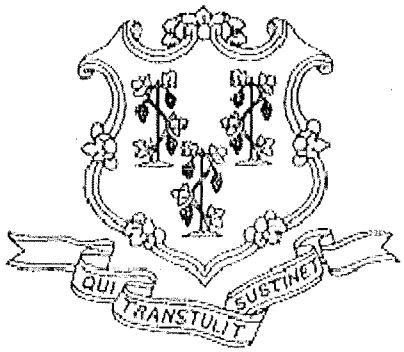

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Testimony before the Education Committee

Monday, February 28th, 2011

11:00 AM in Room 1E

Good morning/afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Frank Sykes the Legislative Analyst with the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) a non-partisan state agency. This Commission is an advocate for the African-American community and for the people. We accomplish our mission primarily through research, policy analysis, outreach and information sharing. We are here today to speak in support of *HB 6432 – An act concerning closing the achievement gap and Senate Bill (SB) 1038 – An act concerning individualized education programs*

In reference to *HB. 6432* the Commission values the work of the Council aimed at eliminating the achievement gap. It is a challenging task to say the least but for many reasons it is necessary. Firstly, looking at the numbers it is unacceptable that minorities experience at least a 50 percent drop out rate annually.[1] The rate

[1] Connecticut State Department of Education – Drop-Out Rates by Race and Ethnicity

for school failure for African-Americans has been consistently higher than whites since 2002.[2] The lack of adequate early preparation, lack of afterschool programs, few mentors and role models are just a list of the many causes for failure. *HB 6432* seeks to reverse this trend by devising, strategizing and engaging stakeholders to make the education system work for our kids. As such it has our full support.

Regarding *HB. 1038* the Commission generally agrees with the recommendations in the bill. Improving the communication process of the IEP between parents and staff is beneficial to all the stakeholders in improving the education of our children. That said we feel that at some point it may be necessary to shorten the period when a child retests after the individual education plans (IEP) plan is established. It is our understanding that children in an IEP plan have to retest after 3 years yet some students may have already met the benchmarks set in the IEP, therefore it may be necessary that testing is done earlier to reflect the student's development. The purpose of the IEP should be to recognize and document improvement when such change occurs. Another concern we have is that when there is plan to change a child's paraprofessional the parents must receive prior notification. I know firsthand that this is not always case. Prior notification for an easier transition for parents, child and school should be beneficial to all parties.

In view of these findings we ask you to support both bills and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

[2] Connecticut SERC – Education Facts