



**Jennifer Alexander, Director of Research and Policy, ConnCAN  
Testimony on Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee  
Study on Educator Professional Standards Board**

Good afternoon Chairs Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe and members of the Committee. My name is Jennifer Alexander. I am the Director of Research and Policy for ConnCAN, a statewide education advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every child has access to great public schools.

Right now, our state is a long way from achieving that goal. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results released just weeks ago show that Connecticut's overall performance is stagnant and middling, and our achievement gaps remain the largest in the country—Connecticut's students of color and low-income students perform at least three grade levels behind their white and upper-income peers on every subject and every grade level tested. This is unacceptable.

How do we improve these outcomes? A starting point has to be make sure that we recruit and retain the best educators—principals and teachers—in every school and every classroom. Research is clear: teachers are the number one factor influencing student success in school.

To ensure that we have the best teachers in each classroom, we need strong policies on educator recruitment, certification, evaluation, promotion, and dismissal. I appreciate that the intention of this report is to try and achieve some of these policy goals; nevertheless, an Educator Professional Standards Board is not necessary for improving student outcomes and could undermine current state efforts to improve educator quality.

The PRI Committee's update on an Educator Professional Standards Board points out that research on such boards is scant and varied. The states under study that have made progress in passing strong educator evaluation and accountability policies and have secured federal funds, such as Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Maryland, have Professional Standards Boards that are limited in their scope, act in an advisory capacity only, and are not governed by a teacher majority. In essence, these Boards exist to provide some guidance, but do not have any policymaking or regulatory authority. The



proposal under consideration, by contrast, could significantly compromise the state's ability to provide accountability for teachers and principals.

To create policies that will help place and keep great educators in our classrooms, Connecticut must establish clear lines of authority and accountability within our existing governing structure that includes the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Department of Education. Decisions made within this structure can, and absolutely should, take teacher's views into account. However, we oppose creating another bureaucratic entity, like the Educator Professional Standards Board reviewed in this study, which would regulate and oversee educator issues. This approach would limit our state's ability to remain competitive for federal funds and waivers, and, more importantly, it will not improve our ability to guarantee a great teacher in every Connecticut classroom.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions.