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Education Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Testimony in favor of Raised Bill 5350, "An Act Concerning Achieving Universal Literacy by Grade Three." Section 12.

I wish to testify for the changes planned for C.G.S. 10-145b as contained in Section 12 of the raised Bill. I am for the proposal to add language to section (i)(1)(A) of 10-145b that will provide "at least thirty hours of training" (up from 15 hours) in the teaching of reading that are part of the mandated five year requirement for professional development activities. (371). This additional time is warranted so that experienced staff are exposed to the latest proven approaches to reading instruction.

I am for the addition of the language that "[s]uch training shall be based on scientifically-based reading research approved by the Department of Education." (374-6). It is easy for a reading program to claim it is "researched-based" with little or no true scrutiny. The requirement that districts use "scientifically-based" approaches, vetted by the SDE, will be critical to ensure improved reading instruction in Connecticut.

I am concerned that reading instruction be implemented using scientifically proven approaches throughout Connecticut. It falls appropriately on the SDE to give guidance and direction to districts for professional development activities in this critical area. Only a systematic and expert review at the State level will provide that direction for the entire state.

In addition to being an attorney, I have my Comprehensive Special Education certification (065) and Intermediate Administration and Supervision certification (092). My experiences in Special Education, including work as a Surrogate Parent, 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 methods that have been thoroughly researched will reduce the need to expend resources later on.

A child who is unable to read is going to be extremely limited in participating in life's activities as we 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. Improving the rate of literacy will reduce the rate of incarceration.

In the past someone with an eighth grade education could have be productive, raise a family, and participate in civic life. That time is long gone. This is the time for Connecticut to move forward in the area of reading instruction. I ask the Committee for a favorable vote on the proposed language in Section 12.

Thank you for your time and consideration.