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Testimony to Education Committee  
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Chairs Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 5352, An Act Concerning Student-Centered Learning and House Bill 5356, An Act Concerning Bridges Between Public Schools and Institutes of Higher Education. ConnCAN also supports House Bill 5350, An Act Concerning Achieving Universal Literacy By Grade Three, and ConnCAN's CEO Patrick Riccards will testify in support of this bill.

The concept of a system that is designed entirely around student's learning needs, not the needs of adults or the barriers of the status quo, is something that ConnCAN strongly supports and it lies at the heart of House Bill 5352, An Act Concerning Student-Centered Learning. Part of the reason we have not achieved excellent educational options for all students is that, for too long, we have not put students at the center of all education policy decisions. The pilot program proposed by this bill would allow school districts to develop innovative approaches to schooling that rethink the relationship between time and learning, the design of schooling and instruction and the use of technology and assessments, among other options. Such pilots could introduce new blended learning options, for example, that are showing promise in other states but have yet to blossom in Connecticut. Ideally, this pilot should be closely aligned with and integrated into the fundamental reforms offered by Senate Bill 24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness. Together, these reforms can help put Connecticut in the lead nationally for education innovation and results for students.

This bill also addresses high school graduation requirements and connects with the issues raised in House Bill 5356, An Act Concerning Bridges Between Public Schools and Institutes of Higher Education. This bill would create a pilot to implement the common core state standards into their curricula, align such curriculums with college level programs, and test students in grade eleven and use the results of such tests to

assess college readiness. These measures are promising in that they attempt to address the severe graduation and college readiness gaps among Connecticut students:<sup>1</sup>

- Every year, 9,000 Connecticut high school students do not graduate – nearly enough students to fill UConn’s Gampel Pavilion.
- The graduation rate gap between Hispanic and white (non-Hispanic) students is 31.8 points; the gap between African-American and white students is 22.5 points.
- Dropouts from the Class of 2008 will lose more than \$2.5 billion in lifetime earnings because they lack a high school diploma.
- The State of Connecticut spends \$84 million a year on college remediation in basic subjects because 65-72 percent of state college and university students enter college ill-prepared for the work.

In fact, local districts could approach these measures via the conditional and competitive aid grants proposed that are proposed in Senate Bill 24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness. This pilot offers promising steps that should be incorporated into an integrated, comprehensive approach to school reform as is proposed in S.B. 24.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see ConnCAN’s graduation rate report: <http://www.conncan.org/learn/research/high-school-graduation-rates/connecticut-graduation-rates>