



Connecticut Association for the Gifted

Testimony to Education Committee on S.B. 24

February 21st and February 22nd, 2012

Chairwoman Stillman, Chairman Fleischmann, members of the committee, on behalf of the **Connecticut Association for the Gifted** we would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 24. My name is Bianka Kortlan-Cox and I'm the President of the Association. With me is Katie Augustyn, CAG's immediate Past President. Our organization is composed of teachers, parents, administrators, psychologists: in effect, all stakeholders involved in this discussion, BUT we are here to speak solely on behalf of Connecticut's children, and we are encouraged by the current intense focus on improving education for them.

As a country, and as a state, we cannot afford to have our kids leave school unprepared to perform at a level required for success in the global environment of the 21st century. A substantial body of research indicates that for our public education to be effective, it has to start early, be focused on our children's strengths, NOT on their failings, and it has to treat every student as an individual with a distinct set of strengths and talents.

We note the proposals included in Senate Bill 24 relating to efforts to improve the quality of classroom instruction led by well-prepared and consistently effective teachers. We know that great teachers have an impact on students' achievement while in school, and their economic impact continues long after the student joins the workforce and becomes a contributor to the society. To foster the cycle of success requires great teachers who recognize and motivate the potential of each child.

We welcome the Bill's endeavor to tackle some of the most essential steps in encouraging master teaching: recruitment of teaching talent, followed by proper certification, evaluation and a reward system. We are encouraged that the Bill highlights the need for schools to focus on tiered instruction for ALL students, which should lead to personalized learning.

Our organization has always advocated for the needs of high ability children to receive individualized instruction, and we realize that such education would benefit and should be extended to ALL students, at every level. Special attention must be given to children who have been traditionally overlooked for their high ability and talent, and especially to at-risk students from culturally diverse and impoverished neighborhoods who have been denied a chance to develop their full potential because of lack of proper identification and talent development techniques.

We trust that the various stakeholder groups and your Committee will arrive at a plan that would equitably benefit the children of Connecticut. We look forward to contributing our field's collective knowledge and evidence-based models and share our expertise in working with The Commissioner and all organizations that support excellence in public education.