



## State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

860-240-8555

March 4, 2013

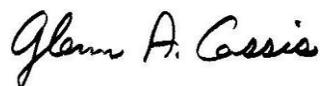
Senator Stillman, Rep. Fleischman and members of the Education Committee, my name is Glenn Cassis, Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission. We believe that a quality education for African-Americans is more than a fundamental right. Due to the educational disparities it has become a civil right for the many who have not been afforded an equal education. ***HB 6504 An Act Concerning Alternative School Programs*** helps to protect students' rights to an equal education.

Students currently enrolled in alternative education, by definition, are not able to experience a rewarding experience in the traditional public educational system. Ideally efforts should be made to get them back into the mainstream. Unfortunately this is most often not the case but the State still has the responsibility to provide the best possible education. HB 6504 would help insure that students in alternative school programs do not fall through holes in the educational system. Students enrolled in alternative school programs should be reported on so that the legislature and policy makers can determine if educational progress is being achieved. HB 6504 would require districts to maintain enrollment data and provide reports on students to the State Department of Education. Currently this data is not available in the school district. Local school districts and boards of education would become more accountable to student outcomes. This bill would help reduce the number of students who may be pushed out of public schools to alternative school programs by requiring informed parental consent. Since there is an over-representation of African-American students in alternative education it is important that we do as much as possible to reduce that number. Informing parents that it is within their rights to challenge a student's placement may in the long run help reduce students in alternative school programs.

The Legislature has made a wise decision by addressing this issue. HB 6504 would help ensure that students in alternative school programs are provided with comparable services as their cohorts attending public schools. Students in alternative school programs will need to be successful in order to experience a positive future after high school. Diluting their education with lower standards or fewer course offerings would be harmful. This bill seeks to correct this issue.

The African-American Affairs Commission supports HB 6504.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn A. Cassis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.

Glenn A. Cassis

Executive Director