



State of Connecticut  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

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Connecticut Commission on Children

Education Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly  
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**Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and Honorable Members of the Education Committee,**

My name is Steven Hernández, and I am the Attorney for the Legislature's Commission on Children.

I am here today to provide the Commission's testimony in **support** of three raised bills:

- H.B. 6503, An Act Concerning Public School Pool Safety (ED);
- S.B. 1002, An Act Concerning Community Schools (ED); and
- S.B. 1001, An Act Concerning The Development Of The Master Plan By The Achievement Gap Task Force And The Receipt Of The Master Plan By The Interagency Council For Ending The Achievement Gap (ED).

**H.B. No. 6503, An Act Concerning Public School Pool Safety**

The Commission supports the proposed requirements in H.B. 6503 that a physical education teacher that teaches swimming be (1) certified as lifeguard, (2) in CPR, and (3) trained in first aid. The Commission also supports the requirement of swimming school safety plans that begin with best practices in school safety.

Swimming is a popular pastime for our Nation's Children. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 36% of children aged 7-17 years swim at least six times per year, making swimming the fourth most popular recreational activity in the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury death among children aged 1-4 years, and the second leading cause of unintentional injury death among children 5-9 years. More than 60% of fatal drowning cases of 0-4 year-olds occur in swimming pools.

Among the best practices for pool safety listed by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission are staff trained and certified in first aid and emergency response and training in CPR. For more information you go to [www.poolsafety.gov](http://www.poolsafety.gov), or go to the CT Commission on Children's website for informative links.

### **S.B. 1002, An Act Concerning Community Schools**

The Commission supports S.B. 1002. This bill marks an important step toward recognizing that learning and healthy development is a Community concern, as much as it is an individual effort.

According to the Coalition for Community Schools of the Institute for Educational Leadership, Community Schools can help achieve a healthy balance between home, community and school that promote the so-called "Conditions for Learning," where:

- Early childhood development is fostered through high-quality, comprehensive programs that nurture learning and development;
- The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students;
- Students are motivated and engaged in learning—both in school and in community settings, during and after school;
- The basic physical, social, emotional, and economic needs of young people and their families are met;
- There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents and school staff; and
- The community is engaged in the school and promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful and that connects students to a broader learning community.

By fostering strong partnerships, share accountability for data-driven results, setting high expectations for all; building on community's strengths; and embracing diversity, we will move one step close to breaking cycles of poverty through education and healthy development.

### **S.B. 1001, An Act Concerning The Development Of The Master Plan By The Achievement Gap Task Force And The Receipt Of The Master Plan By The Interagency Council For Ending The Achievement Gap (ED)**

Avoidable shortfalls in academic achievement, which fall disproportionately on poor and minority youth in our state, impose heavy and often tragic consequences, including diminished self-esteem, lower earnings and poorer health. For many of these students, lagging achievement evidenced as early as 4th grade appears to be a powerful predictor of high school and college graduation rates, as well as lifetime earnings.

The legislature defined the Achievement Gap as the significant disparity in the academic performance of students among and between racial groups, ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, genders, and English language learners and students whose primary language is English.

The legislature established the Achievement Gap Task Force to address the academic achievement gaps in Connecticut by considering effective approaches to closing the achievement gaps in elementary, middle and high schools. The Commission on Children is serving as a

member of the Achievement Gap Task Force, and a workgroup of the Task Force is currently drafting a Master Plan which will guide the state's efforts toward closing the achievement gap by 2020.

I've appended facts and resources to our testimony that we hope will aid in your deliberation, and we are at your disposal for whatever other information we may provide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.