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**TESTIMONY OF AFRICAN CARIBBEAN AMERICAN PARENTS  
OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, INC. (AFCAMP)  
BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
REGARDING PROPOSED BILL NO. 6682, AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF  
EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL**

**APRIL 5, 2013**

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Interim Executive Director

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on Proposed Bill No. 6682. AFCAMP is a parent-driven nonprofit organization whose central mission is to educate, empower, and support parents of children with disabilities who reside primarily in the cities of Hartford and New Haven. On behalf of AFCAMP parents and youth, I am here today to speak in support of this proposed legislation to require school districts choosing to place police officers in schools to adopt formal policies or Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) with their local police departments. Such policies and MOAs can help school and police personnel collaborate in a manner that addresses safety concerns while contributing to a positive educational environment and establishing safeguards against unintended consequences.

Police presence in schools has been a long-established practice in many urban communities across the country. It is a familiar occurrence in several local school districts in which we work with parents of students with behavioral and emotional special needs. Particularly where students are Black or Latino, having police stationed in schools raises serious concerns about how school personnel and police respond to conduct that is a manifestation of the student's disability,<sup>1</sup> reflects normal adolescent behavior or otherwise warrants something other than a disciplinary response. While recognizing the important goal of school safety for all children, the AFCAMP mission and our awareness of the reality of undesirable and unintended consequences of police presence in schools, constrain us to be wary of

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to the IDEA and 34 C.F.R. 300.500(e), any child with a disability is entitled to a manifestation determination meeting before the school district can make a change in their placement, i.e., remove the child from school, on account of their conduct. If police are involved in school disciplinary matters, in particular for lower level offenses, the rights of children with disabilities to a manifestation determination may be infringed upon.

expanding the practice. **Proposed Bill No. 6682 provides a mechanism to balance school safety**, as it is envisioned by increased police presence in schools, with safeguards against those consequences.

AFCAMP is one of several organizations working with the Center for Children's Advocacy on a Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Reduction Project that seeks to reduce the number of school-based arrests for minor offenses and the disproportionate impact on youth of color. School-based arrests are a major factor in the proliferation of the school-to-prison pipeline, a phenomenon in which children of color are disproportionately and unnecessarily referred to law enforcement by schools. One of the DMC strategies that has yielded promising results in reducing the number of school-based arrests is the adoption of MOAs between schools and police similar to what is proposed in the legislation before you.<sup>2</sup>

AFCAMP urges you to act favorably on Proposed Bill No. 6682. If AFCAMP can be of future assistance as you consider this legislation, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your attention.

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<sup>2</sup> As a result of this important work, school-based arrests in the City of Hartford have already been reduced **by nearly 60 % compared to last school year**. (Based on data provided by C.S.S.D. comparing September 2011-April 2012 and September 2012-April 2013)