

TESTIMONY OF ERICA E. BROMLEY, MSW
Director, Manchester Youth Service Bureau
63 Linden Street, Manchester, CT 06040

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Regarding
RB 6682: AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN
BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee: My name is Erica Bromley and I am the Director of the Manchester Youth Service Bureau, which is one of 102 YSBs serving 145 communities throughout CT. In addition, I am the Vice President of the CT Youth Services Association and co-chair of its Advocacy Committee.

As you probably know, despite a decrease in overall rates of juvenile arrest, the proportion of arrests occurring in our schools has been rising. Research shows that this *growing trend of in-school arrests is not caused by worsening behavior by students, but rather by a change in the ways adults respond to behaviors*, largely due to policies that promote suspension, expulsion, and arrest that exclude students from the learning environment, too often for minor and non-criminal behaviors. These discipline practices are linked to negative socio-emotional and developmental outcomes, academic failure, and often dropout-particularly among our African American and Latino students and those with special education needs.

Raised Bill 6682 calls for districts with police in their schools to have a Memorandum of Understanding in place codifying the role of police officers and school administrators. OPM's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee developed a model MOU and in Manchester, we have found it to be very effective. Using that MOU as a guide, the Superintendent and key staff, the Police Chief, the Juvenile Court Judge and the Youth Service Bureau, got together with our newly formed Manchester Agencies Police and School Collaborative (MAPS) to look at graduated sanctions and how to use existing diversion programs as well as create additional diversionary intervention options.

This bill also proposes to strengthen the collection and reporting of data. In Manchester, the collaborative partners worked together to gather our data, which was critical to ensuring buy-in, to understanding how this issue effects our community and schools and to determine what types graduated sanctions and school staff training would be most effective. The proposal to require each district to collect and report this data will make the process much easier for others beginning this work as well as those of us continuing to move forward.

After roughly seven months of planning, our new system was implemented in the Fall of 2011. We have now been able to analyze data comparing school year 2010-11, which

was prior to implementation, with school year 2011-12, as well as to look at the first 6 months of this year's data.

What we found was very encouraging. At Manchester High School, school based arrests decreased from 137 to 30, a 78% reduction from 2010-11 to 2011-12 school year. In the same period, expulsions decreased by 69%. At the middle school, arrests were down 23% in this same time period. During the 1st six months of the current school year, arrests at the high school are down 71% compared to the first six months of the 2010-11 school year prior to implementation and at the middle school, arrests are down 61% for the same time frame.

Through the collective work of the MAPS Collaborative and new policy guidelines, School Resource Officers, school administration and school staff are now referring students more often to diversionary programs as well as to service providers based on individual needs of the students and families. This work is done with strong leadership both inside and outside of the classroom and the will to keep youth out of court and in school.

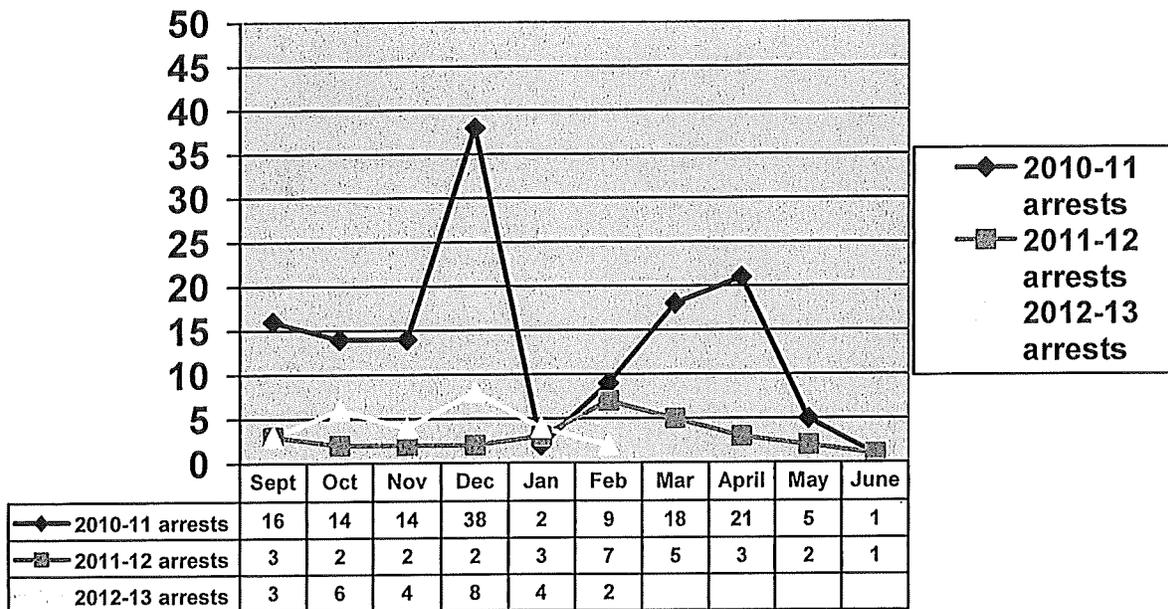
I truly believe that such a collaborative initiative can be replicated throughout the State with similar success and I encourage the Legislature to keep this model in mind as it works to not only reduce school based arrests, but also to improve school climate, student engagement and achievement. Our efforts in Manchester have focused on keeping more kids in school in a safe and productive learning environment. The development of a Memorandum of Agreement and the collection of school arrest data were critical aspects in those efforts.

Those at the table in Manchester, as well as the Board members of the CT Youth Services Association, applaud the effort of this committee and support Raised Bill 6682.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

(Attached you will also find two charts showing the "Turn the Curve" on arrests at the High School and Middle School as a result of this Initiative)

MANCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL – School Based Arrests



ILLING MIDDLE SCHOOL – School Based Arrests

