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Testimony of State Representative Robert Sanchez
Public Health Committee
February 27, 2013

H.B. # 5988, An Act Concerning Hearing Assessments For Middle School Students;

Good morning Co-Chairs Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, ranking members Senator Welch, Representative Srinivasan and members of the public health committee. Thank you for raising H.B. 5988 An Act Concerning Hearing Assessment for Middle School Students;

NIHL (Noise-induced hearing loss) can be caused by continuous exposure to loud sounds over an extended period of time; such exposure can be associated with MP3 players such as an iPod, and continuous loud music in the home or car. NIHL is 100% preventable, first and foremost by understanding the hazards of noise and practicing good hearing health to protect your hearing.

Based upon survey data from the Center for Disease Control, researchers suggest that 12.5% of school aged children (6-19) are demonstrating hearing losses consistent with noise exposure, (Niskar 2001). Current state hearing screening guidelines were not developed to detect the early onset of noise induced hearing loss that may come with repeated exposure to loud noises and music over time. Therefore, staff, parents and students are given a false sense of security that our children's hearing is acceptable if they pass the screenings.

The purpose of this bill is to improve the identification of noise-induced hearing in middle school students. I have been collaborating with Dr. Wendy Chase, Dr. Jennifer Tufts and Dr. Christine Hare of the UCONN Audiology Clinic team. We are all looking forward to working with members of this committee in drafting language and moving the legislative process forward. We are more than willing to discuss this in more detail as it concerns early hearing loss and prevention education. I will be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have at this time.