



Testimony: Jennifer Alexander, CEO, ConnCAN

Testimony in Opposition to HB 5078 and HB 5331
Education Committee – Wednesday, March 12, 2014

Thank you Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Ranking Members Senator Boucher and Representative Ackert, and distinguished members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on **HB 5078 An Act Imposing a Moratorium on the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards** and **HB 5331 An Act Concerning the Implementation of the Revisions to the PEAC Guidelines**. I'm here to speak in opposition to both bills.

Like you, ConnCAN believes that every child deserves the opportunity to get a high-quality education, no matter where he or she lives. The bills being discussed today would harm two efforts that are critical for Connecticut to achieve that goal. The statewide teacher and principal evaluation system is essential to making sure that teachers get the feedback and support they need to deliver results for students. And, the Common Core State Standards provide students, parents and educators with clear, high and consistent expectations for what our children need to know to be ready for college and careers and be able to compete in an increasingly competitive and global economy.

First, let me speak about these issues as a mother of two children who are just starting their education journeys. I want my children to have the best possible teachers because I know firsthand the tremendous, life-changing power of a great teacher. I also know that the research is clear about the lasting negative impacts on our kids of even just one ineffective teacher.¹

I also want to know that if my daughters keep up their end of the bargain—if they study hard and meet the expectations set out for them at school each year—they will be ready to successfully tackle the challenges ahead of them in college, career, and life. And I want objective information about their readiness each year. I don't want to wait until they are in college to know that there is a problem.

This is not the reality for far too many children in Connecticut. That's why I'm testifying here today.

Right now, too many Connecticut students are graduating from high school unprepared for college level work. Nearly 65 percent of Connecticut students who attend state colleges and universities need remedial coursework. This is demoralizing to kids and costs our state dearly: \$84 million per year, according to a recent study.² Even students in Connecticut who are looking to a career in the military run into roadblocks: About one in four failed the United States Army's Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.³ In addition, Connecticut's top performing students are falling behind kids in other states and countries.⁴

This is unacceptable. It's time to raise the bar for **everyone**.

Make no mistake, implementing the educator evaluation system and moving to the Common Core Standards requires incredibly hard work for everyone involved. But, survey results show that teachers are excited about the

¹ National Bureau of Economic Research. "The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood." December 2011. Hyperlink: http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/value_added.pdf

² Alliance for Excellent Education. "Saving Now and Saving Later: How High School Reform Can Reduce the Nation's Wasted Remediation Dollars." May 2011. Hyperlink: <http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/saving-now-and-saving-later-how-high-school-reform-can-reduce-the-nations-wasted-remediation-dollars/>

³ Education Trust. "Shut out of the Military: Today's High School Education Doesn't Mean You're Ready for Today's Army." December 2010. Hyperlink: http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/ASVAB_4.pdf

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics. "National Assessment of Educational Progress." November 2013. Hyperlink: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

possibilities offered by the Common Core Standards.^{5,6,7,8} They know that the standards are a chance to deepen problem-solving skills and critical thinking, and offer more flexibility for educators, ensuring that all kids graduate with the knowledge and skills required for college and a good career.

Educators are also positive about the evaluation system. For example, a recent study from the University of Connecticut's Center for Education Policy Analysis⁹ found that three-fourths (74 percent) of administrators participating in the evaluation pilot program felt that with sufficient resources, such as time and staffing, the program could improve teacher practice at their school.

Recently, the State Board of Education approved new guidelines that allow districts two years of additional flexibility to adjust to the new evaluation system and the Common Core standards. These new guidelines were developed and approved by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, which includes teacher unions, school board members, principals, and superintendents. This flexibility allows districts to implement these reforms carefully and deliberately, while not losing sight of our long-term goals of raising standards, demanding accountability for results, and improving outcomes for children.

Efforts like the bills being considered by the General Assembly today are unnecessary and would be a huge step backwards for kids. These bills are misguided attempts to conflate the issues at hand and delay implementation of these critical reforms. They undercut the educators all across our state who are working hard to provide the feedback and support educators need to improve and to make the Common Core State Standards come alive in their classrooms.

The bills under discussion today would serve only to make more difficult the job of raising expectations and improving education for all Connecticut students. We must move forward with the Common Core State Standards and the educator evaluation system so that we can ensure Connecticut remains a place where people want to live, work, and invest in their future, and where our children thrive.

About the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN)

The Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN) is a non-profit advocacy organization leading a movement to improve public education for kids. We bring parents, educators, policymakers, and advocates together to help ensure that all kids have access to great schools regardless of race, wealth, or zip code. To learn more about ConnCAN, visit: www.conncan.org.

⁵ Scholastic Inc. "Primary Sources: Connecticut." 2014. Hyperlink: <http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/ct-2.htm>.

⁶ National Education Association. "Poll: Three out of Four Teachers Support Common Core State Standards." September 12, 2013. Hyperlink: <http://www.nea.org/home/56687.htm>.

⁷ American Federation of Teachers. "Teachers Assess Implementation Of The Common Core." March 2013. Hyperlink: http://www.aft.org/pdfs/press/ppt_ccss-pollresults2013.pdf.

⁸ National Association of Elementary School Principals. "Leadership for the Common Core: More Than One Thousand School Principals Respond." November 2013. Hyperlink: https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/LeadershipfortheCommonCore_0.pdf.

⁹ UConn Center for Education Policy Analysis. "A Report Card on Teacher Evaluation." February 2014. Hyperlink: <http://cepa.uconn.edu/2014/02/04/system-for-educator-evaluation-and-development/>