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March 17, 2014

**Testimony Concerning Bill Number 476, An Act Concerning the Academic Achievement Gap**

Good day, Members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 476, *An Act Concerning The Academic Achievement Gap*. My name is Dr. Evelyn Robles and I am principal of Worthington Hooker School in New Haven, CT.

Students today need to acquire higher order thinking skills and be able to adapt to new, complex situations for learning and preparing for the 21st century. Educators and school systems are charged with two enormous and additional tasks to help English Language Learners succeed: a) teaching them the grade-level academic content that all students must learn; and, b) helping them develop proficiency in English with a focus on academic English, in oral and written language and across the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Research has shown that English language learners need between 5-10 years to succeed in school given the appropriate instruction. It is imperative to provide English Language Learners with high quality instruction and longer time quality programs will provide a strong foundation and academic background to our bilingual students.

In addition, we must give teachers strong incentives, especially for certified bilingual teachers. Teachers coming from another country need at least five years to meet the state requirements for certification. As we know, certifications requirements in Connecticut give one year to complete all requirements for population of graduates and certified teachers from other states, we must give teachers more time - at least 3 years to pass the test and meet all certification requirements. It is imperative for our districts to have certified personnel, teachers who can teach our students in their language.

Moreover, our teachers and administrators must receive professional development on addressing the linguistic and academic needs of our English Language Learners;

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additional funding should be provided for teacher and administrator preparation programs to include at least 9 credits on addressing curriculum implementation, strategies, and effective models to address the needs of Language minority students.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony. I look forward to working with you in making sure that we provide high quality programs for our English Language Learners to ensure their linguistic and academic success.