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Statement of Juan Candelaria
State Representative for the 95th Assembly District
For the Education Committee
March 17, 2014
In support of
S.B. 476, An Act Concerning the Academic Achievement Gap

Good Morning Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher, Representative Ackert, and other esteemed members of the Education Committee.

My name is Representative Juan Candelaria and I represent the 95th Assembly District in New Haven. I would like to express my strong support for S.B. 476- **AN ACT CONCERNING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP.**

As of last year 13.4% of Connecticut residents were foreign born, 17.7% were Latino or Asian, 49.4% of immigrants in the state are naturalized U.S. Citizens, 11.3% of registered voters are New Americans, and 86.2% of children with immigrant parents are U.S. citizens. In addition, in 2010 alone Connecticut's English Language Learner (ELL) population surged 59 percent, rising to 292,562 from 184, 018. These figures only attest that as our state's English Language Learner population grows so will the need for our state to provide more effective and cohesive Bilingual Education Programs for such population.

National research has revealed that ELL students must receive bilingual education instruction for a period of five to seven years in order to become proficient in both English and their dominant language. A major extensive study released in 1991 by the U.S. Department of Education found that the more schools developed children's native-language skills, the higher they scored academically over the long term in English.

Unfortunately that is not the case in Connecticut, many of our ELL students are transitioned from a Bilingual Education Program within 30 months into mainstream classes, –inhibiting their possibilities for proficiency in both linguistic and academic mastery. The impact is worse for those ELL students that have fewer than thirty months remaining before graduation. These students are enrolled into an English as a Second Language (ESL) Program and may be provided with intensive services to enable them to speak, write and comprehend English by the time they graduate. However, the reality is that these students by no

means graduate fully comprehending English, not to mention their server limitations in speaking and writing in English.

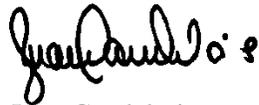
For these reasons, the Education Committee should consider S.B. 476's concept of increasing the time a student may spend in a program of bilingual education from thirty months to sixty months, and provide funds within available appropriations to school districts for such increase.

In addition, I strongly believe that in order to truly assess the linguistic and academic progress of ELL students, the State Board of Education should provide the state English mastery standards in both English and the student's dominant language.

As the voice for our constituency, it is our duty to ensure that every child/student of Connecticut is provided with a preeminent education. By implementing this legislation, Connecticut would ensure that our states' ELL population is provided with the necessary time to become proficient in English and have the opportunity to thrive in the United States.

I want to thank you in advance for your favorable consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juan Candelaria". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juan Candelaria
State Representative
95th District