

**TESTIMONY OF ERICA E. BROMLEY, MSW
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**Regarding
H.B. 5355: AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN
BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Committee on Education: 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 Connecticut. In addition, I am the Vice President of the CT Youth Services Association.

As you probably know, despite a decrease in overall rates of juvenile arrest, the proportion of arrests occurring in our schools continues to be high. 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.

H.B. 5355 calls for districts with police in their schools to have a policy or Memorandum of Understanding in place specifying the role and responsibilities of police officers in schools. 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 created the 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 Collaborative has been running since February of 2011 and was one of, if not the first, Collaborative of its kind.

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 of 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 schools year 2011-12 and 2012-13 as well as to look at the first 5 months of this year's data.

What we continue to see is very encouraging. At Manchester High School arrests decreased from 137 arrests in 2010-11 to 30 arrests in our first year of implementation in 2011-12. This is a 78% reduction. In year two (2012-2013), we saw a reduction of 70% compared to the year prior to implementation. In the first five months of this school year,

we have seen a reduction of 83% compared to the first five months of the year prior to implementing. At the middle school, arrests were down 23% in year one, 60% in year two and 79% in the first five months this year. I would say we are clearly on the right track and have maintained our success.

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 the individual needs of the students and families. This work is done with strong leadership both inside and outside of the classroom.

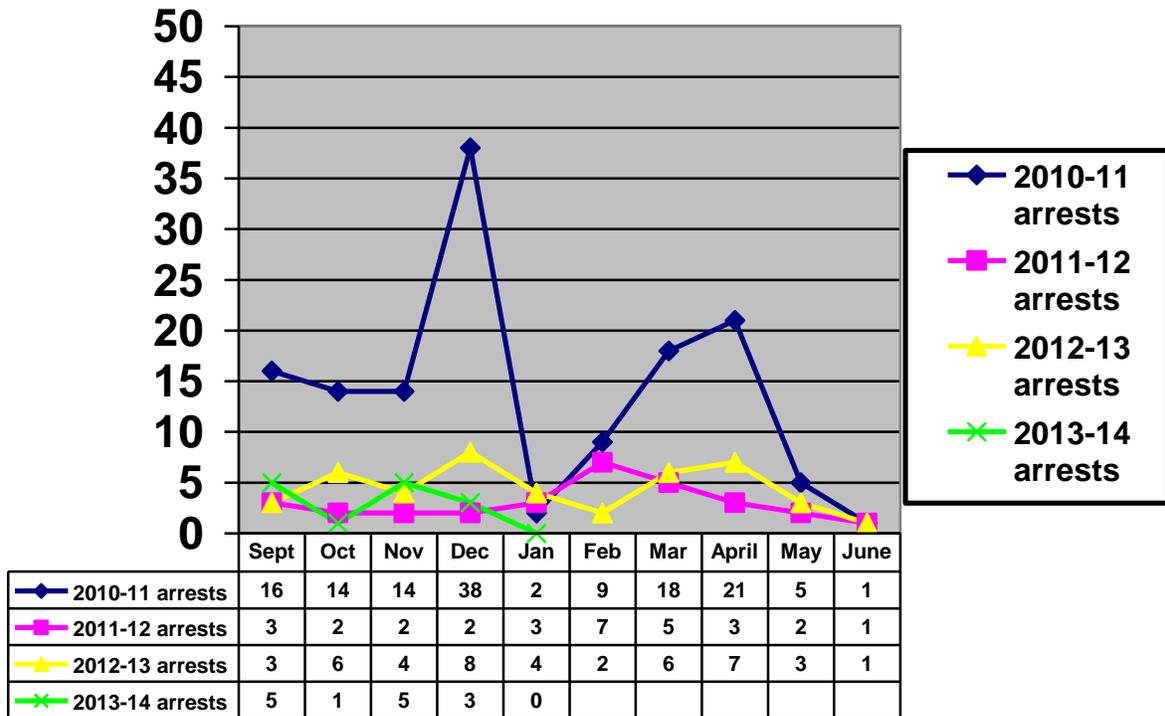
I truly believe that such a collaborative initiative can be replicated throughout the State with similar success and I encourage the Legislature to keep this model in mind as it works to not only reduce school based arrests, but also to improve school climate, student engagement and achievement. Our efforts in Manchester have focused on keeping more kids in school in a safe and productive learning environment. The development of a Memorandum of Understanding 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, again applaud the effort of this committee and support H.B. 5355.

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



ILLING MIDDLE SCHOOL

