



University of Connecticut
School of Social Work

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Institute for
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Testimony of Bethany Brockmeyer, Policy Practice Major, UCONN Graduate School of
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**In Support of SB 54 An Act Concerning Collaboration between Boards of Education and
Law Enforcement Personnel**

Judiciary Committee, February 24th 2014

Dr. Nancy A. Humphreys
Founding Director

Honorable Senators and Representatives;

My name is Bethany Brockmeyer and I am a second year MSW Policy Practice candidate at UCONN SSW. I am an intern at the Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work. I have been an educator in alternative education programs, community college, along with developing training programs for manufacturing companies to upgrade technology.

I am here today to testify on Senate Bill 54, "An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel."

I support this bill as it addresses the need to evaluate and restrict the use of in-school arrests as a disciplinary avenue for minor behaviour issues. SB 54 requires the use of a graduated response model and a memorandum of understanding regarding use of in-school arrests to provide options and resolution to student behavioural problems. This is an important component to design and implement procedures to eliminate arbitrary in-school arrests based on minor behavioural problems. SB 54 seeks to serve the emotional and mental health needs of our youth in trouble and to re-design how we view and address their needs. This bill has great bearing on the futures of many of our youth.

Education is not solely academic. Students in school are learning to socially interact with authority figures and other students. As adolescents, they have the natural challenges associated with that period of growth and development: academically, emotionally, and psychologically. Add to that, the many unknowns each student brings with them to school each day – environmental, societal, and personal challenges that become barriers to acceptable behaviour and learning. To respond to minor behaviour problems with in-school arrests teaches these youths another lesson: that it is acceptable to exclude them from the mainstream because of their inability to handle their environmental and/or personal challenges. These may be children who do not qualify for Special Education or interventions, but it is still our responsibility to respond to them and to provide services and interventions, hopefully, opening opportunities for changes and improvements in their lives.

SB 54 provides a means to more accurately identify the root of behaviour problems in our schools with the potential to positively influence the outcome. A graduated approach to discipline looks at each incident and youth to determine the most effective intervention. Youth who commit minor behaviour problems are not perpetrators in need of arrest and conviction; they are victims of their environment, societal ills, and sometimes mental health issues. Education is about providing the opportunity to

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become aware of your potential in life; a student should not be defining their opportunities by the consequences of their challenges and barriers.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to address this hearing and my support of SB 54.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.