



## **State of Connecticut**

**African-American Affairs Commission**

**State Capitol**

**210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

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Senator Slosberg, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher, Representative Lavielle, Senator Winfield and Representative Sanchez and other distinguished members of the Education committee. My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative analyst for the African American Affairs Commission. The mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut.

I am here today to support [S.B. No. 1058](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM and comment on [S.B. No. 1060](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION IN SCHOOLS.

There are great racial disparities in chronic absenteeism rates in Connecticut. For African American students the rates are significantly higher than those for white students being 15.7 % while the rate for white students stands at 7.2%. There may be many factors that are causing this alarmingly high rate of students to be missing school so I commend the committee for including specific ways to address this problem. I do want to point out that the attendance review team might be hard to fill as in many of the cities and towns that are having problems with absenteeism are also faced with many other problems in their schools so the individuals who may be needed to serve on this

attendance review team may be serving in other capabilities. However I do want to offer to the commissioner of the state department of education the assistance of the AAAC to assist in filling these absence review teams. The AAAC is also happy to see that this bill includes the requirement for chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan to be created that can be used by local and regional boards of education. The plan is required to include key information on “A research-based and data-driven mentorship model that addresses and attempts to reduce chronic absenteeism through the use of mentors, such as students, teachers, administrators, intramural and interscholastic athletic coaches, school resource officers and community partners”. We would like to point out though these mentors should be working with the entire family and not the student alone. There are also incentives and rewards for school districts to reduce their absenteeism rates which will hopefully entice school districts to make concerted efforts to address this problem.

Next I would like to comment on SB 1060. The use of seclusion and restraint in schools are of concern. More than 30,000 instances of seclusion and restraint were used in schools in the last report from SDE on this topic. While we do understand that some students may have behavioral problems we believe that there are better ways to deal with these students especially those with disabilities which tend to be the ones getting this particular form of “punishment”. I do think it is beneficial to have an in service on this issue for teachers and administrators however the policy as a whole needs to be addressed on a greater level.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify.