

Testimony Concerning HB 1099.

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee; good day and thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1099, ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION TO DEVELOP A VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CONNECTICUT EDUCATION SYSTEM.***

My name is Paul Freeman, I am the Superintendent of the Guilford Public Schools, and I am a member of CT Legislative Achievement Gap Task Force.

I first want to thank you for listening. Some weeks ago I had the opportunity, with other members of the Achievement Gap Task Force to address the leadership of this Committee to share our work and make recommendations. More recently, with other Superintendents and Chairs of local boards of education, I had the opportunity to have lunch and conversation with Senators Kennedy and Slossberg. Also, I know that Superintendents and boards of education have been inviting members of the legislature to breakfasts and Board meetings where we have shared our concerns and our recommendations.

I want to note that I see much from all of those conversations reflected in Bill 1099.

Over the past several years now, we have, I believe, surfaced important conversations about education in the State of Connecticut. We have done good work in the field of education in the service of our children. I believe that we have taken important steps in the right direction, and I am proud of what we have achieved. I am supportive of both Common Core and Smarter Balanced, and I believe both are improvements over past standards and past assessments. But the work of the past several years has been done piecemeal. Too often, initiatives, mandates and reforms have been driven by diverse agendas and implemented without consideration for coherence, common timelines, or alignment. Too often multiple initiatives have competed with each other, pulling limited resources and energies in too many directions - diluting or confusing the public discussion about education and educational improvement in our state. Too often, this piecemeal approach has led to simple, one size fits all solutions, has fostered frustration and anxiety, has pitted educational advocates against each other rather than leading us to rally together, and has kept us from doing our best work.

I applaud the suggestion that we identify and organize the important work ahead of us. I support the idea that we need to prioritize and find coherence among the many initiatives, mandates and reforms with which we are now wrestling. I encourage us to work collaboratively to create and communicate a clear and comprehensive time-line for our important work. I would like to suggest, respectfully, that should this work be tackled by a task force that we should be thoughtful about to whom the recommendations of such a task force are reported and how they should best be carried

forward and acted upon. I would like to see educational decisions, as often as possible, made by knowledgeable and expert educational leaders working at the local level, with local boards, supported not micro managed by the state.

I stand ready to assist in moving this important work forward. I support House Bill 1099.

I would also like to commend Raised Bill 1098, as it aligns with policy recommendations from the Achievement Gap Task Force. Increased minority teacher recruitment is an important component in addressing the gap. All our students deserve to see themselves in influential roles in education.

Again, thank you for listening.