



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children



**Testimony before the Education Committee on Raised S.B. 1099 and S.B. 1098
Submitted by Steven Hernández, Director of Public Policy and Research
Connecticut Commission on Children
March 19, 2015**

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these proposals before you. My name is Steven Hernández. I am the Director of Public Policy and Research of the CT Commission on Children and I am here today to speak in favor of:

- S.B. No. 1099 (RAISED) An Act Concerning The Establishment Of A Commission To Develop A Vision And Strategic Plan For The Connecticut Education System;
- S.B. No. 1098 (RAISED) An Act Concerning Teacher Certification Requirements For Shortage Areas, Interstate Agreements For Teacher Certification Reciprocity, Minority Teacher Recruitment And Retention And Cultural Competency Instruction.

S.B. No. 1099, An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Commission to Develop a Vision and Strategic Plan for the Connecticut Education System

Proposed Senate Bill 1099 would establish a Planning Commission for Education to develop and ensure the implementation of a strategic master plan for public education in Connecticut.

In our experience working with our partners on issues related to the achievement gap, we've learned that closing gaps in educational opportunity is a task that cannot be undertaken in the schoolhouse alone. In addition to ensuring excellence in teacher and school leader hiring and retention, improving attendance, reading at proficiency by third grade, and improving school climate, acknowledging and addressing the life of the student outside of the schoolhouse is as important to understanding the complex set of circumstances that have perpetuated gaps in opportunity and achievement for poor children and children of color.

Concurrently, with the impact of education reform unfolding before us, persistent gaps in opportunity around us, and difficult decisions about the education budget looming, this is precisely the time when we, as a state should be examining issues of streamlining duplicative and burdensome mandates, improving access to data to inform our educational decisions, examining the methods of assessing student achievement, and removing those barriers in our system that have fractured the time-tested connection between our students and their families, and our teachers.

This proposal in Senate Bill 1099 to bring together business, educators, parents, civil rights leaders, scholars and other lay and professional leaders to lead this discussion and come up with a strategic plan is inspired. The very idea that excellence, innovation, and the equitable distribution of education can occupy the same space is what will propel the state of Connecticut into its new and dynamic demographic and financial reality.

S.B. No. 1098, An Act Concerning Teacher Certification Requirements For Shortage Areas, Interstate Agreements For Teacher Certification Reciprocity, Minority Teacher Recruitment And Retention And Cultural Competency Instruction

We strongly support the provisions in this bill that promote minority teacher recruitment and cultural competency instruction in our teacher preparation programs. The National Association of School Psychologists defines cultural competency as the “integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes.” In this sense, cultural competency is a call to action to address assumptions about ourselves and our students, and to acknowledge that each of us, including our students bring a context to the table that, is shared and understood, can lead to improved educational outcomes.

The Commission on Children also supports the following bills:

- S.B. No. 1103 (Raised) An Act Concerning School Districts Of Innovation;
- S.B. No. 1095, An Act Concerning Students Assessments;
- H.B. No. 7020, An Act Concerning Early Childhood Educators And Initiatives;
- S.B. No. 1101, An Act Concerning The Office Of Early Childhood;
- H.B. No. 7021, An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation Program Efficacy;
- S.B. No. 1102, An Act Concerning Certification Requirements For Bilingual Educators;
- S.B. No. 1100, An Act Concerning The Elimination Of The Reporting And Collection Of Certain Student And Teacher Data.

Thank you for your time.

