

Jennifer Alexander, CEO ConnCAN
Testimony Before the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
April 28, 2015

Good Afternoon Chairman Duff, Chairwoman Janowski and distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. Thank you for holding this hearing and providing the opportunity to offer comment on the appointment of Dr. Dianna Roberge-Wentzell as the new Commissioner of Education - a position critical to the academic success of our students today and economic future of our state.

For a decade, the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now, or ConnCAN, has advocated for student-focused policies to improve outcomes and opportunity for Connecticut's children. In order to provide our students with the great education they need and deserve, it is crucial that our new Commissioner of Education has vision, leadership, and experience in supporting academic achievement for our state's children. That's why ConnCAN endorses the appointment of Dianna Roberge-Wentzell as Connecticut's permanent Commissioner of Education.

An effective leader in the role of Commissioner of Education is critical to keeping the promise of a great school for all kids. We are pleased that the state has chosen a Commissioner in Dianna who has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to improving education and can point to a proven track record of working for Connecticut's students.

During her time as Interim Commissioner, and as Chief Academic Officer in the State Department of Education, Dianna has been a fully engaged leader - dedicated to improving educational opportunities and results for Connecticut students. Dianna is an experienced and effective champion for our kids who has proven her commitment to students and the belief that every child can succeed, no matter their race, family income or zip code.

She has expressed unwavering support for Connecticut's kids in her time as a teacher and education leader at local and state levels. For nearly three decades, she has worked diligently to ensure that all students have access to an education that will prepare them for success in college and career.

Together, we have made great progress in recent years to improve education in Connecticut, but there are still far too many children and families for whom the system does not work. Nearly 40,000 children, in fact, are attending schools where they aren't learning to read or do math. Connecticut's children can't wait any longer for a great education. They need a Commissioner of Education who will prioritize their academic achievement and ensure that they get a great education, now.

In sum, we support the appointment of Dianna as Commissioner of Education and look forward to the future, one where we work together to achieve the goal of a great education for all and build upon the progress made by former Commissioner Stefan Pryor, the Governor and state leaders to ensure Connecticut is a place where kids get the great education they need and deserve.

Thank you.