



State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE CAPITOL

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**Testimony of the Stamford Legislative Delegation:
Representative William Tong, Representative Patricia Billie Miller,
Representative Daniel Fox, Senator L. Scott Franz, Representative Livvy Floren,
Representative Caroline Simmons, Representative Terry Adams**

HB 6186 AN ACT PROTECTING SCHOOL CHILDREN

March 4, 2015

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On October 2nd 2014 the principal and assistant principal of Stamford High School were charged with failing to report a sexual relationship between a teacher and student. These administrators had knowledge of this sexual relationship dating back to at least December of 2013. By not reporting this and other incidents to the Department of Children and Families (DCF), as they are required to do by law, these administrators violated their responsibility as educators and as stewards of the public trust.

For this egregious dereliction of duty, these administrators received accelerated rehabilitation and are seeking reinstatement to their former positions. We, along with the entire Stamford community, are understandably outraged.

House Bill 6186: AN ACT PROTECTING SCHOOL CHILDREN, seeks to correct this and others problems that have been highlighted by this terrible incident. This bill:

1. Increases the penalty for failure to report child abuse from a class A misdemeanor (carrying a penalty of up to one year in prison and/or a fine of up to \$2000) to a class E felony (carrying a penalty of up to 3 years in prison and/or up to \$3,500 in fine), as well as make clear that mandatory reporters include supervisors of other mandatory reporters who make a report of which the supervisor is aware.
2. Creates a felony crime of conspiracy for failure to report
3. Holds DCF and School Districts accountable for investigation and action by creating a stronger mandatory process for investigating child abuse claims that consists of (a) requiring each school district to establish a confidential rapid response team to coordinate with DCF and ensure prompt reporting of alleged abuse and immediate access to information and witnesses/individuals relevant to DCF's investigation, and (b) ensure

4. that DCF and the state's Multi-Disciplinary Teams charged with investigating reports of child abuse take swift, thorough and effective action to investigate and address every report of child abuse in any school across the state.
5. Requires educators to attend DCF mandatory reporter training and refreshers in order to maintain their teacher certification. As of November of last year, only three teachers in the Stamford School System have taken the online mandatory reporter training.
6. Requires DCF to conduct in-person trainings in schools rather than online.
7. Bars reappointment of any mandatory reporter who is found guilty of failing to report. If an individual charged with failing to report applies for accelerated rehabilitation (AR), such individual may not seek reappointment to their job as a condition of AR.
8. Requires school principals to annually certify to the School District that training has been completed.
9. Requires School Districts to certify to the State Department of Education(SDE) that training has been completed.
10. Empowers SDE to take action against non-compliant school districts by creating sanctions for non-compliance, which could include a fine of at least \$25,000 per calendar year (SDE has the discretion to levy a larger fine based on the extent of the district's failure to train). Fines shall be deposited in a fund established by DCF to fund investigations of child abuse.
11. Clarifies that the standard for reporting is "reasonable suspicion."
12. Clarifies that our statutes require the reporting of abuse of all students in a school system, regardless of age, except for adult education students or students over 18 in a GED or other continuing education course.

As a community, we trust that our children will be safe when they go to school and that educators will work to ensure that safety. When that fundamental trust is violated we expect appropriate action to be taken both by administrators and the justice system. While this bill cannot fix the damage that has already been done, it will help to protect our children in the future and prevent similar incidents.

Thank you.