



State of Connecticut  
**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Central Office ~ 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT 06106

*Promoting Equality and Justice for all People*

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Testimony  
Education Committee  
Wednesday, February 25, 2015

**HB 6834, AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS, HB 6837, AN ACT ENCOURAGING A GRADUATED RESPONSE MODEL FOR STUDENT DISCIPLINE**

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher, Representative Lavielle and members of the Education Committee. My name is Robin Fox and I am an attorney at the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. I am here to state the Commission's **SUPPORT** for HB 6834, and related bill HB 6837.

Studies have shown that treating students differently based on racial, ethnic and economic factors adversely affects the ability of those students to succeed. Two federal agencies - the U.S. Depts. of Justice and Education - issued a [Dear Colleague letter to schools](#) last January addressing the issue of school discipline and racial discrimination, which continues to be a problem nationwide. That letter references data collected by the Office of Civil Rights, which demonstrates that students of certain racial or ethnic groups are disciplined more frequently and more harshly than their peers.

Schools in Connecticut already collect and report discipline data to the federal government, so it should be easy to provide the data to the state. Better knowledge of individual situations may prevent disparate treatment before it escalates into formal complaints with federal and state agencies. HB 6837 would also aid in understanding what disciplinary measures are used, when and the potential discriminatory application of such measures.

The Commission currently receives and investigates complaints of discriminatory treatment in schools. While we have successfully mediated several of those claims and litigate others, we have seen an alarming uptick in the number of such complaints.

It is important for the Commission's mission of eliminating discrimination that schools discipline fairly. The data collection proposed by this bill, specific to Connecticut, would assist the Commission in investigating these claims, as well as serve to provide information and feedback to the parents, schools and communities involved.

Equal educational opportunities significantly impact student success in education. Give students a fair chance to make something of their young lives. The Commission encourages you to enact HB 6834.

I will happy to address any questions you may have.