State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children

Testimony before the Education Committee on Proposed S.B. No. 944 and H.B. 6835
Submitted by Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director
Connecticut Commission on Children
February 25, 2015

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

My name is Elaine Zimmerman. I am the Executive Director of the CT Commission on Children and I am here today to speak on behalf of Senate Bill 944, An Act Establishing a Full-Day Kindergarten Requirement, and House Bill 6835, An Act Concerning English Language Learners.

Senate Bill 944, An Act Establishing a Full-Day Kindergarten Requirement

The state defines full-day kindergarten as providing students with 900 hours of instruction for at least 180 school days. Not all towns provide full day kindergarten. The enclosed chart details town by town kindergarten enrollment. For example, only 23% of children in West Haven receive full-day kindergarten; 2% of Torrington students receive full-day kindergarten.

Does this matter? Full-day kindergarten has been identified as the catalyst behind an increase in independence in learning and a greater level of classroom involvement, productivity and ability to reflect amongst kindergarteners. It results in reading gains and math achievement. There are fewer behavioral problems, increased social and emotional development, lower remediation rates and higher attendance rates after attending full-day kindergarten.

Half-day kindergarten provides 450 hours of schoolwork for a minimum of 180 days. Six of our school districts provide half-day kindergarten to all children. This includes Wallingford, Plainfield, and Farmington. Five school districts provide half-day kindergarten to some children. This includes Torrington and West Haven.

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The Center for Evaluation and Education Policy found significant academic gains among full-day kindergarten students which did not exist for half-day students. This included better reading abilities in first grade and significant gains in comprehension and vocabulary, as compared to their peer cohort without full-day kindergarten.

Socially, there is more continuity day-to-day, as well as more relational connection with the teachers. Parents benefit as they can work a full work day and child care costs are lowered. Teachers benefit as there is more time for assessment, individualized instruction, and more time to spend with students.

Of most importance, kindergarten is the bridge between preschool and the next 12 grades. For our state to espouse the quality, hours and supply of preschool and then dip down the parallel fundamentals for kindergarten, shows little continuity in transition from early childhood to formal learning.

CT prides itself on our early childhood system. Kindergarten is the toll booth between the early years and the schoolhouse. It cannot be less than what preceded it. The backfill is small to bring all schools to full-day kindergarten. Our achievement gap and commitment to quality learning outcomes require a swift response to this gap.

House Bill 6835, an Act Concerning English Language Learners

State data on student achievement show alarming disparities in achievement along socioeconomic, racial, and linguistic lines. These disparities have existed for years, but nowhere is that disparity clearer than among our English language learners.

In 8th grade math, Connecticut has the worst ELL vs. non-ELL education achievement gap in the country. As we know from our work as a member of the Achievement Gap Task Force, the percentage of third grade Hispanic students who met goal in reading (27%) is roughly 40 percentage points lower than White students (67%). While English language learners speak 139 different dominant languages in the State, 72 percent of ELL students speak Spanish.

Finally, because of existing 20-student threshold that ELLs must surpass before a school is required to provide an ELL program, less than half of the state's students who need ELL support are receiving it (approximately 9897 out of 22914).

For these reasons, the Commission supports HB 6835 with a couple of modifications. Eliminating the threshold at which schools are required to provide English language supports is key to ensuring that every child in the state receives an opportunity to learn. While the bill would change the threshold to six students or more, we believe that every ELL student should have the opportunity to learn and succeed in our schools. Additionally, the bill should:

- Establish a center in higher Ed. to develop (a) educational methods that are culturally relevant to English language learners; (b) effective learning strategies to help students with low achievement make up lost ground; and (c) a leadership program and teacher preparation program that incorporates effective, research-based child development and reading instruction tools and practices. We know that several of our state schools, led by CCSU, are poised to take on this important work.

- Allow Alliance Funding to be aimed at serving ELL students if districts are not able to secure funds from local municipalities. Require the inclusion, implementation, and monitoring of strategies aimed at supporting ELLs in Alliance Plans.

Thank you for your time.

KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
SCHOOL YEAR 2014-2015

CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The following information is derived from the preliminary October 1, 2014 student census data submitted to the State Department of Education.

FULL DAY

A *full-day* kindergarten program provides 900 hours of actual schoolwork for a minimum of 180 days. Approximately 94% of Connecticut kindergarteners are enrolled in full-day programs.

One hundred and forty-three (143) school districts, **thirteen (13)** Charter Schools and **fourteen (14)** Magnet Schools provide **full-day** kindergarten to **all children**. For the basis of this report, any district with 95%-100% enrollment in full-day kindergarten was considered for this category.

Andover	Columbia	Griswold	New Canaan	Salisbury	Waterford
Ansonia	Cornwall	Groton	New Fairfield	Scotland	Westbrook
Ashford	Coventry	Guilford	New Hartford	Seymour	West Hartford
Avon	Cromwell	Hamden	New Haven	Sharon	Weston
Barkhamsted	Danbury	Hampton	Newington	Shelton	Westport
Berlin	Darien	Hartford	New London	Sherman	Wethersfield
Bethany	Deep River	Hartland	New Milford	Simsbury	Willington
Bethel	Derby	Hebron	Newtown	Somers	Wilton
Bloomfield	Eastford	Kent	Norfolk	Southington	Winchester
Bolton	East Granby	Killingly	North Branford	South Windsor	Windham
Bozrah	East Haddam	Lebanon	North Canaan	Sprague	Windsor
Branford	East Hampton	Ledyard	North Haven	Stafford	Windsor Locks
Bridgeport	East Hartford	Lisbon	North Stonington	Stamford	Wolcott
Bristol	East Haven	Litchfield	Norwalk	Sterling	Woodbridge
Brookfield	East Lyme	Madison	Norwich	Stonington	Woodstock
Brooklyn	Easton	Manchester	Old Saybrook	Suffield	Reg. District 6
Canaan	East Windsor	Mansfield	Plainville	Thomaston	Reg. District 10
Canterbury	Enfield	Meriden	Plymouth	Thompson	Reg. District 12
Chaplin	Essex	Middletown	Pomfret	Torrington	Reg. District 13
Cheshire	Fairfield	Milford	Portland	Trumbull	Reg. District 14
Chester	Franklin	Monroe	Preston	Union	Reg. District 15
Clinton	Glastonbury	Montville	Putnam	Vernon	Reg. District 17
Colchester	Granby	Naugatuck	Ridgefield	Voluntown	Reg. District 18
Colebrook	Greenwich	New Britain	Salem	Waterbury	

Charter Schools

Achievement First Bridgeport	Bridgeport
Achievement First Hartford Academy	Hartford
Amistad Academy District	New Haven
Booker T. Washington Academy	New Haven
Brass City Charter School District	Waterbury
Elm City College Preparatory School	New Haven
Elm City Montessori	New Haven
Highville Charter School District	Hamden
Integrated Day Charter School	Norwich
Jumoke Academy	Hartford
New Beginnings Family Academy	Bridgeport
Odyssey Community School	Manchester
Side By Side Community School	Norwalk

Magnet Schools *

Academy of Aerospace & Engineering	Rocky Hill
Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary	Avon
Discovery Academy	Hartford
East Hartford-Glastonbury Magnet School	East Hartford
Goodwin College Early Childhood Magnet	East Hartford
International Magnet School for Global Citizenship	East Hartford
Montessori Magnet School	Hartford
Museum Academy	Hartford
Reggio Magnet School of the Arts	Avon
Regional Multicultural Magnet School	New London
Six-to-Six Magnet School	Bridgeport
The Friendship School	Waterford
University of Hartford Magnet School	West Hartford
Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School	Hamden

* This listing includes magnet schools operated by Regional Educational Service Centers. District operated magnet schools are included within the district listings.

Six (6) districts provide **full-day** kindergarten to **some children**. These are listed below along with the percentage of children in full-day kindergarten.

Marlborough	2%	Tolland	27%	Watertown	3%
Stratford	87%	Torrington	2%	West Haven	23%

EXTENDED DAY

An *extended-day* kindergarten program provides more than 450 hours but less than 900 hours of actual schoolwork for a minimum of 180 days. Approximately 2% of all kindergarteners are enrolled in extended day programs.

Three (3) school districts provide **extended-day** programs to **all children**. For the basis of this report, any district with 95-100% enrollment in extended-day kindergarten was considered for this category.

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Four (4) school districts provide **extended-day** programs to **some children**. These are listed below along with the percentage of children in extended-day kindergarten.

Canton	74%	Oxford	6%
North Haven	1%	Tolland	73%

HALF DAY

A *half-day* kindergarten program provides 450 hours of actual schoolwork for a minimum of 180 days. Approximately 4% of all kindergarteners are enrolled in half-day programs.

Six (6) school districts provide **half-day** kindergarten to **all children.** For the basis of this report any district with 95%-100% enrollment in half-day kindergarten was considered for this category.

Farmington	100%	Plainfield	100%	Watertown	97%
Marlborough	98%	Wallingford	100%	Regional District 16	100%

Five (5) school districts provide **half-day** kindergarten to **some children.** These districts are listed below along with the percentage of children in the half-day programs.

Canton	26%	Stratford	13%	West Haven	77%
Oxford	94%	Torrington	2%		