

Testimony before the Education Committee on Governor's Bill No. 942, An Act
Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education, S.B.
No. 943, An Act Establishing Full-Day Kindergarten and H.B. No. 6835, An Act
Concerning English Language Learners
Submitted by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
February 25, 2015

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

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region with the mission to put philanthropy into action to create lasting solutions that result in vibrant communities within our region. In 2014, the Foundation approved grants totaling nearly \$9.4 million in strategic investments to support education in our region and more than \$7.3 million to support family and social services that promote the conditions for educational and life success. These investments support our goal to ensure that every child in Greater Hartford enters kindergarten ready to learn and graduates from high school prepared to succeed.

Yet, **philanthropic investments are not enough** to ensure that every child in Greater Hartford and in other Connecticut regions receive equitable and high quality developmental and education opportunities to succeed in school and life. The public sector must provide leadership, even in the toughest budget climate, to promote education as our state's top budgetary and policy priority.

Through our investments and work with our partners in the Hartford region, we have learned that education leadership includes (1) creating and sustaining conditions that enable family, school and community partnership for student learning and success; (2) ensuring that every child has equitable access to an array of academic and developmental supports both in and outside of school; and (3) providing high quality, coordinated and holistic supports that must begin at birth and continue through high school graduation.

Connecticut should be proud of the progress made in the last year to improve supports for early childhood and K-12 system-building. **We must remain firm in our commitment to invest in the developmental and educational success of our children, and particularly our most vulnerable children, to realize the promise of a thriving Connecticut.** The Governor's Bill No. 942 should be carefully considered to avoid significant cuts that undo the progress we have made and that harm the future developmental and educational success of Connecticut's children.

To this end, the Hartford Foundation supports:

- **S.B. No. 943, An Act Establishing Full-Day Kindergarten**, as a two-generation strategy to promote developmental and educational outcomes for all children. National research reveals that full-day kindergarten particularly benefits low-income children by increasing access to early, high-quality developmental and educational resources and benefits low-income working families who might otherwise need to pay for childcare beyond the half-day kindergarten hours.
- **H.B. No. 6835, An Act Concerning English Language Learners**, as a strategy to increase equitable and high-quality developmental and educational outcomes for all children. Research shows that thirty months of bilingual education is insufficient to develop the skills necessary in a second language to succeed

10 Columbus Boulevard, 8th Floor
Hartford, CT 06106

860-548-1888
fax 860-524-8346
www.hfpg.org

academically. Increasing the hours of bilingual education from thirty to sixty months is a first step to matching policy with research and increasing critical supports to English language learners (ELL). This year, the Hartford Foundation provided the required funding match that enabled the awarding of a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to boost literacy and academic success for young English Language Learners and their families in Hartford. The Hartford Public Schools serve more ELL students than any other Connecticut district. We believe that H.B. 6835 can provide further support to the students, educators and families engaged in this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.