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An affiliate of the
National Education Association

Written Testimony of the

Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

RE: Full Day Kindergarten, SB 944

February 25, 2015

CEA represents 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state. CEA supports SB 944, Governor Malloy's proposed requirement that school districts provide full-day kindergarten opportunities to all Connecticut students.

According to the Connecticut State Department of Education, there are only thirteen school districts currently NOT offering full-day kindergarten to the majority of their students (i.e., they are offering either half-day or extended day, or offering full-day kindergarten to less than 50% of their students).ⁱ We believe that in order to provide equitable educational opportunities to all Connecticut students, every school district must provide access to full-day kindergarten.

The research is clear. Full-day kindergarten students receive many including greater reading and mathematics achievement gains compared to students in half-day classes.ⁱⁱ Full-day kindergarten also provides a crucial bridge between pre-kindergarten programs and the more structured school environment students must navigate in first grade.

In fact, in areas where full-day kindergarten was added and then taken away due to budgetary changes, elementary teachers noted a marked difference in educational preparedness when students entered the later grades.

Access to full-day kindergarten programs for all students will help level the proverbial playing field for all Connecticut children, providing students in West Haven the same educational opportunities as those in nearby towns like Woodbridge and Milford.

Full-day kindergarten offers social, emotional, and intellectual benefits to kindergartners.ⁱⁱⁱ When they are engaged in full-day kindergarten classes, students have more time to focus and reflect on activities, and to transition among activities. In full-day kindergarten classrooms, teachers have more time to get to know their students. Establishing rapport with one's students is crucial to students' sense of belonging in the classroom, and sets the tone for students' future classroom experiences.

Full-day kindergarten teachers are also able to develop a better understanding of students' needs, enabling them to develop more appropriate activities and lessons.^{iv} Teachers also have the opportunity to identify and address their students' learning challenges early, which not only saves districts resources and money, but puts students in better positions to succeed in subsequent years.^v

Connecticut cannot realistically expect to narrow the achievement gap without addressing the readiness gap. Expanding full-day kindergarten access will go a long way toward equalizing educational opportunity and enhancing learning for all children, especially for low-income and minority students.^{vi}

In closing, CEA urges members of the education committee to support this bill and ensure that children across the state all have access to universal full-day kindergarten.

ⁱ Per October 2014-15 PSIS data submission by school districts to SDE, obtained Feb. 23, 2015.

ⁱⁱ Walston, Jill and West, Jerry. *Full-Day and Half-Day Kindergarten in the United States: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/web/2004078.asp>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ackerman, Debora J., Barnett, W. Steven, and Robin, Kenneth B. *Making the Most of Kindergarten: Present Trends and Future Issues in the Provision of Full-day Programs*. National Institute for Early Education Research, March, 2005. <http://nieer.org/docs/?DocID=118>.

^{iv} Elicker, J. and Mathur, S. "What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, v.12, no.4, pp. 459-480, 1997.

^v Plucker, Jonathan A, Eaton, Jessica J., Rapp, Kelly E., et. al. *The Effects of Full Day Versus Half Day Kindergarten: Review and Analysis of National and Indiana Data*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, January 2004. www.doe.state.in.us/primetime/pdf/fulldayreport.pdf.

^{vi} Cryan, John R., Sheehan, Robert, Wiechel, Jane, and Bandy-Hedden, Irene G. "Success outcomes of full-day kindergarten: More positive behavior and increased achievement in the years after." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 1992, v. 7, no. 2, 187-203.