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**TESTIMONY OF ROBYN KAPLAN-CHO,  
THE CONNECTICUT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (CEA)**

**RB 1054 AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA**

**RB 1053 AN ACT CONCERNING OUT-OF-SCHOOL  
SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS FOR STUDENTS IN  
PRESCHOOL AND  
GRADES KINDERGARTEN TO TWO**

**RB 1060 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RESTRAINT AND  
SECLUSION IN SCHOOLS**

**BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MARCH 11, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Robyn Kaplan-Cho, and I am on staff with the CEA, representing over 37,000 active teachers in the public schools of Connecticut.

CEA supports **Bill 1054** which adopts a definition of dyslexia and requires more specific pre-service and in-service training for certified staff on the detection and recognition of dyslexia as well as evidence-based intervention for students with dyslexia. As you know, section 10-220a(a) of the general statutes prescribes a long list of topics which must be covered in professional development programs for which there are limited time and resources. But certainly improving teacher and administrator knowledge related to dyslexia is a worthy effort, given how fundamental reading skills are in every student's educational journey. The requirement for specific coursework on dyslexia in all teacher preparation programs may not be necessary. Clearly, regular classroom teachers need to know how to recognize symptoms of dyslexia, how to work with appropriate specialists in the school to adapt curriculum and instruction for students with dyslexia. This can be covered in a special education class that may already be offered. Moreover, the training really belongs mostly at the elementary level, since by the time the student reaches middle and high school, the problem should have been identified.

**Raised Bill 1053** prohibits out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students in pre-school through grade 2. CEA recognizes the need to ensure that these youngest public school students receive an ongoing educational program and whatever behavior supports that are necessary to allow them to remain in school. However, we also have an obligation to ensure the safety of other students and staff. Thus, if out-of-school suspensions and expulsions are to be completely prohibited, there must be alternative settings in which these students can receive their educational programming with ongoing behavior supports. This requires significant resources, since many preschools and elementary schools simply are not equipped to provide safe and appropriate alternate settings. We cannot ignore the reality that many school personnel are severely injured by violent students who are only in pre-school or early primary grades. In fact, CEA has assisted a number of our members who were forced to leave their teaching positions due to a work-related disability caused by a violent but very young student.

Finally, **Raised Bill 1060** provides clear directives on the use of restraint and seclusion in schools and also requires that in-service training for all certified staff includes restraint, seclusion and other de-escalation techniques. There is no question that only highly trained individuals should be employing restraint procedures and only as an emergency intervention. However, it is important that the legislation recognize that such training should be voluntary for certified teaching staff. Given the number of students in any classroom, even with appropriate training the teacher may not be able to properly engage in emergency restraint techniques while also maintaining order and ensuring the safety of all of the other students. Moreover, as is the case with certified staff proving health-related procedures, restraints require a level of comfort and experience that not every teacher may possess. It is imprudent and arguably irresponsible to require any teacher who is uncomfortable with restraint techniques to perform them on his or her students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.