



Joint Committee on Education

March 11, 2015, Public Hearing on Senate Bill 1055: AN ACT CONCERNING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Testimony by John Pellino Connecticut Association for the Gifted (“CAG”)

I'm John Pellino, President of the Board of the Connecticut Association for the Gifted. CAG is a largely volunteer organization that advocates for the needs of high potential students in our state. I'm here today to support Raised S.B. 1055, AN ACT CONCERNING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

CAG began in 1969 and the entire community – children, parents and school districts benefitted significantly from coordination with the Department of Education's State Consultant for gifted and talented for many years. That position has remained unfilled since Dr. Jeanne Purcell retired almost six years ago. At present the state's remaining public face of Gifted Education - its web site - also remains untended. If you looked at, you would find a time machine - circa 2009. The last directory to gifted and talented programs in Connecticut dated 2008 is posted there.

In the absence of an employee at the Department to provide assistance to parents or school districts regarding identification of and programming for gifted and talented students, more harm has been done than a website going untended. The most recent data supplied by the Department shows that 34% of Connecticut's school district failed to report a single gifted and student, in violation of the CGS statutes. That means according to state law, more than 6000 children have not been given the opportunity to meet their potential, among them students of color are disproportionately represented by a factor of three to one. And there is a loss for all of Connecticut's children when the educational practices at the core of gifted and talented education aren't supported to improve outcome for the entire range of students.

Unless the official coordinator's role is filled, then we will be right back here in front of the Education Committee in two years, with an even bigger list of things that are not going well for the entire range of state's students.

The good news is that we know what to do. We can point to successful programs in each of the committee members' districts - efforts large and small that show pockets of success for high-potential students. But it's a piecemeal, scattered patchwork, with no statewide coordination and with no coordinated guidance. There is an untapped potential for leadership in this area, including exemplary programs that remain unknown outside their community. Once again Connecticut is home to the National Research Center for Gifted and Talented, staffed with world-renown leaders in the field of gifted education. With all of this at our doorstep what we desperately need is a specialist at the Department to bring coordination to resources that already exist in Connecticut.

Let's create the capacity - officially - that will ensure that districts have the leadership and support needed to actually serve the entire range of students. We ask you to pass and implement Raised S.B. 1055. Thank you for your attention.