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Written Testimony in Support of S.B. No 1055 (Raised) AN ACT CONCERNING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS For Joint Committee on Education Public Hearing, March 11, 2015

To: Education Committee

I am writing in support of S.B. No 1055 (Raised) AN ACT CONCERNING GIFTED AND TALENTED.

It should be noted that the regulations concerning Gifted and Talented Education fall under the Special Education "basket." Students who are Gifted and Talented learners have different learning needs than those of the typical student. In much the same way as students identified as Special Education learners, these students require additional differentiation and learning strategies to receive a suitable education.

Teachers who are trained in gifted education and are able to use instructional strategies that assist the gifted learner find that they are able to better meet the instructional needs of all of their students.

Unfortunately, not all school districts are equipped to identify their gifted and talented students, as required by CT statute. In addition, school districts are finding themselves on their own to locate and survey similar school districts in the state to determine best practices, and develop strategies for their school systems. Some school districts may not be able to adequately pursue such inquiries. The studies of services and best practices, as required in Section 2 of this Bill, would alleviate this burden at the school district level, and provide better access to this information for all school districts in the state.

This bill would place no additional cost burden on the state budget, because a shift in current resources would be allocated to cover this bill. Providing for the needs of gifted and talented students is an important investment in our children's futures, and in the intellectual capital of our state's future.

We have seen in our own family the difference that instructional strategies focused on the gifted learner can make. At the end of the fifth grade, my son (an identified gifted learner) was beginning to participate less in the classroom, and was not provided educational opportunities that met his needs. He was on the path that so many gifted students travel – one of doing the minimum to make the grade, and loss of self-esteem. However, his opportunities at a school that focuses on gifted education and personalized learning plans allowed him the opportunity for academic challenge and pacing that met his desire and abilities. He is now a thriving, enthusiastic learner, who has become a leader in his school and his Boy Scout Troop. He has a brighter future ahead of him as a result of gifted education, and his community will be better served as a result.

These children and more will continue to be overlooked unless S.B. No. 1055 is passed.

I thank you for consideration of this Bill.