



Connecticut
Early Childhood
Alliance

Testimony of Merrill Gay
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Before the Education Committee
March 11, 2015

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, members of the committee

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Merrill Gay; I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a statewide membership organization committed to ensuring that all children in Connecticut are healthy, safe and ready for lifelong success.

I'm here today to speak in favor of S.B. 1058 AN ACT CONCERNING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

For years, schools have tracked their average daily attendance as well as excused and unexcused absences. The adoption of computerized attendance tracking allows us to do a much more sophisticated analysis of attendance data. This bill moves the focus from tracking average percentages by school to looking at specific children who are missing too much school. We applaud this move.

It is clear from the experience in New Britain that when a district uses the data to intervene as soon as an attendance problem can be detected, they can be effective in reducing the problem. More importantly, the data from New Britain shows that when a chronic absence problem can be addressed, student achievement improves.

The one area of concern in this bill is the confusing use of the term "District school attendance review team." It seems like either it's a district level team or it's a school level team. In New Britain, they have district staff that support school based attendance teams. By having the teams at the schools it is the people who are closest to the students who do the first level intervention with back up from the district support staff.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.