



Testimony of
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Education Committee Hearing
March 2, 2016

SB 323 An Act Concerning Unsubstantiated Allegations of Abuse and Neglect By School Employees

HB 5469 An Act Concerning Student Privacy Data

HB 5470 An act Concerning a Pilot Program for Students in High School Interested in Pursuing a College Degree in Education

SB 317 An Act Concerning Dyslexia

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Jan Hochadel. I have been a teacher in the Connecticut Technical High School System and am the President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 90 local unions representing more than 30,000 public and private sector employees. Our members include more than 15,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses and other school personnel across the state. It is on their behalf that I appear before you to today.

SB 323 An Act Concerning Unsubstantiated Allegations of Abuse and Neglect By School Employees

Allegations of abuse and neglect in school settings are very serious matters that need to be fully investigated and addressed in order protect our children. But when accusations made against school employees are found to be without merit, we should act to protect the careers and reputations of those determined to be innocent. SB 323 does this by requiring all documents related to the report and investigation of the unsubstantiated allegation to be removed from the employee's personnel file and prohibiting the use of those documents in any decisions related to the accused's employment. The DCF process is designed to protect everyone involved, and school systems must recognize the outcome of that process. This bill is a fair and reasonable course of action in such instances, and we strongly urge the committee to act favorably upon SB 323.

HB 5469 An Act Concerning Student Privacy Data

The world has changed significantly since we were students. Today, our children check assignments, conduct research, access practice websites and upload homework online. Educators, administrators, regulators and policymakers are also fully engaged in the digital

world and use student data is a significant tool in assessing learning and measuring growth. Yet there is little or no policy at the state or district level to protect the privacy of students and the confidential information linked to them. HB 5469 begins to tackle these issues by regulating the use and disclosure of student data by entities contracting with the State Department of Education.

While this bill takes important leaps forward, it could further strengthen student protections with the following changes:

- Requiring the bill to apply to state agency data systems.
- Amending the definition of “student” in lines 126-127 to include preschool students.
- Adding remedies and penalties for instances of unauthorized access or student identity theft for state contractors that manage student data.
- Replacing “reasonable security procedures and practices” in lines 135-136 with “current industry best practices and procedures.”
- Striking “knowingly” on line 142, because it provides too much room for operators to deny accountability.
- Striking lines 161-163 as it permits operators to disclose student information to a third party.

We look forward to working with the Committee on enhancements to protect students.

HB 5470 An act Concerning a Pilot Program for Students in High School Interested in Pursuing a College Degree in Education

Diversity within our schools provides students with rich opportunities to learn from peers of different racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. We should embrace diversity and the learning experiences it provides so that all children can be successful in our global society. It's not enough to have diverse student bodies. We must also work to ensure that Connecticut's educators are representative of the students they serve so that all children have positive role models from a variety of backgrounds. Although minority students account for over a third of Connecticut's public school students, only 7 percent of the state's teachers are minorities.

HB 5470 provides one strategy to recruit more minority teachers. By creating a teacher pathway programs for high school students, HB 5470 partners school districts with Connecticut State Universities. Minority students who seek to pursue careers in education can enroll in teacher preparation program classes and receive financial assistance through the Governor's Scholarship Program. By identifying and recruiting prospective minority teachers while still in high school, this program would create a pipeline to bring more diversity to the ranks of our Connecticut's teachers.

We urge you to include Hartford as a participating district in HB 5470. The Hartford Federation of Teachers has already begun a “My Classroom to My Colleague” program that shares the goals of HB 5470. This fledgling program could be greatly benefit and accelerated by the resources provided in this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.