

Center for *Children's* Advocacy

Testimony of Bonnie B. Roswig, Senior Staff Attorney Center for Children's Advocacy to the Education Committee regarding HB 5550 An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Education Statute

March 7, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischman and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 5550, An Act Concerning Various Additions to the Education Statute.

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Medical-Legal Partnership Project of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a non-profit organization representing Connecticut's most at-risk youth. The Medical-Legal Partnership Project is a collaboration of the Center and pediatric health care facilities around the state committed to meeting the needs of Connecticut's most vulnerable children. We submit this testimony in reference to House Bill 5550 and request that it be amended to include training for public school personnel on the educational impact of Sickle Cell Disease when a child in the school has been identified with the disease in the prior school year.



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Sickle Cell Disease Impacts Children's Ability to Access Their Education

Sickle Cell Disease is a devastating illness that affects the red blood cells. Children with Sickle Cell Disease suffer severe pain (treated by intensive pain medication and hospitalization), strokes, increased infections, bone damage, lung blockage, eye damage and delayed growth. Sickle Cell Disease is a chronic ailment that affects each patient differently. For some children, episodes of severe pain, hospitalization and school absences are infrequent. For other children, the symptoms are ongoing and result in continuing hospitalization, transfusions and potent medication for pain management. For these children, absences from school are frequent.

Training Would Provide Essential Information for School Staff

The individualized manifestations of Sickle Cell disease necessitate training for school staff on the educational impact of the disease. Connecticut General Statute 10-220a provides for in-service training for school personnel. We are requesting that the in-service training statute be amended to include training on Sickle Cell Disease. This training would only be relevant to those schools where a child with Sickle Cell Disease had attended the school in the previous academic year.

The amendment would be found in CGSA Section 10-220a:

(a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide an in-service program for its teachers, administrators and pupil personnel who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or professional educator certificate. Such program shall provide teachers, administrators and pupil personnel with information on.... and (9) in those schools where a child has been diagnosed with Sickle Cell Disease in the previous academic year, the educational impact of Sickle Cell Disease, including the educational supports required for students with the diagnosis.

Training Will Impact Educational Results

Children with Sickle Cell Disease have experienced negative educational outcomes.

They struggle with academic work, they leave school prior to graduation, etc. and they are unnecessarily reported to the Department of Children and Families. If the educational needs of children with Sickle Cell Disease are properly understood, they will be provided with the appropriate supports and accommodations.

The Opportunity for Educational Success Must Apply to All Children

State and federal law require that all children, regardless of their race, nationality or medical condition, be provided with the opportunity to achieve educational success. The children who would benefit from this bill are primarily children of African American and Latino descent who suffer from a disability – this bill provides them with the opportunity to achieve to their full potential.

Respectfully submitted,

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