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Bruce Morris, State Representative
Testimony to the Joint Committee on Education Public Hearing

HB 5551: An Act Concerning the Commissioner's Network of Schools

Monday, March 7, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the education committee. I thank you for your leadership and dedication to ensuring our state continuously moves forward towards an education system that works for all children. I am State Representative Bruce Morris from 140th assembly district, in Norwalk, Connecticut and Chair of Black and Latino Caucus.

I testify in strong support of HB 5551: An Act Concerning the Commissioner's Network of Schools. If we are serious about closing our persistent achievement gaps in the state of Connecticut, we must understand the critical role turning around our state's lowest-performing schools play in that mission.

When we established the Commissioner's Network in 2012, we clearly displayed our commitment to ensuring the thousands of children who attend schools that lack resources to improve student achievement would get the tools they need to succeed. But the establishment of a program does not represent a moment to rest on our laurels. We must adopt a mindset that we can always improve, always go further, and always improve our current programs to best fit the needs of our students.

House Bill 5551 ensures the investment we've made, and the investment we are scheduled to make, in our efforts to turnaround our lowest-performing schools will be coupled with the necessary changes and improvements designed to enhance the program. I am proud of our efforts in this area, but know we can do more. We can think bolder, as many other states' have already when it comes to school turnarounds. We can give our lowest-performing schools the tools, flexibility and autonomy they truly need to turn themselves around.

To conclude, it is because of these reasons and many more that I ask you to support House Bill 5551, and show you remain committed to closing our state's achievement gap by improving our state's lowest-performing schools.

Furthermore, I ask you all to support a modern teacher evaluation system and oppose Senate Bill 380. Every child deserves an effective educator in their classroom, and it is the job of this Committee and our state's leaders that the policies designed to do so are supporting, not arbitrarily rejected before they can get a chance to work for our kids.

Thank you.