

Submitted Testimony by Dr. Cheryl Resha in opposition of:

**S.B. No. 378 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS TASK FORCE.**

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

As a former Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Manager for the Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education and in my current role as Professor of Nursing at Southern Connecticut State University, I must express my concern and disappointment about S.B. No. 378. **I am very concerned about the elimination of one-half credit in health and safety education**, as described in CGS, Section 10-16b. I am writing to urge you to vote “NO” on this bill as it currently reads.

The intent of the high school graduation credit requirement is to ensure that students graduate high school with the knowledge and skills to become healthy, productive citizens and part of the state’s high quality workforce. How can you expect a high quality workforce if they don’t have the skills needed to become health literate and avoid behaviors that put them at risk for lifelong chronic diseases? Our state needs a healthy, educated workforce. Additionally, both the health and education of the workforce contribute to the financial health of our state. Being healthy will save the state millions of dollars in future healthcare costs.

I understand that districts may continue to offer health education; however, without a graduation credit requirement, many districts will opt out of health or offer just the bare minimum. In fact in our neediest districts where health disparities are the greatest, health education is being cut due to lack of resources and time. This will only get worse and the lack of health education will result in continued disparities in health, especially with preventable diseases, such as tobacco and other substance abuse, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, and poor nutrition and inactivity leading to obesity and type 2 diabetes.

In addition to *it’s the right thing to do for the health of our children*, it would seem that CT would want to ensure health education is in alignment with the federally mandated, Every Student Succeeds Act which includes health education as vital component of a well rounded education.

I urge you to make a firm commitment on the health of our future generations and vote “NO” on S.B No. 37 as written. Your continued support of quality health education along with health education as a requirement for graduation will demonstrate your concern for the health and well-being of Connecticut’s youth. In addition to voting “NO” as written, I urge you to amend the language to include one credit for health education (or at the very minimum, reinstate the 0.5 credit requirement).

Sincerely

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