Dear Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Nicholas T. Chong and I am a voter living the town of Norwalk, Connecticut. I am writing this personalized testimony to oppose SB 359, which prevents the public school information system from disaggregating student data by ethnic subgroups. It is my belief that the ability to look at data in subgroups by race and ethnicity is critical to being able to track outcomes and target interventions to improve negative outcomes. As a professional who has spent over a decade in finance and asset management, including making investments for endowments and pensions, I am a strong believer that data provides us the information we need to make informed decisions, and in the realm of education, this can improve and change lives.

The language in SB 359 would limit our state’s ability to disaggregate data to two conditions: 1) if it is federally mandated or 2) if the data is uniformly collected for all ethnic subgroups for all students in the state. Connecticut should have the choice to disaggregate data in a manner that makes sense for our unique needs. SB 359’s first condition subjects our state choice to federal mandates. SB 359’s second condition creates an impossible standard and thus prohibits disaggregating data, since data is currently not collected from all students in the state (i.e. home schooled and private school students). Our state has a right to our own collected data, and we should retain a choice in how it is aggregated. These limits remove Connecticut’s ability to choose how to aggregate our community data.

The support for this bill comes from individuals who believe disaggregated data would impact the educational career of their children, specifically, in college admissions. Today, students’ educational careers are impacted because we are not paying close enough attention the needs of students who are invisible in generalized or aggregated race and ethnic data. Lifting the veil on this data, why maintaining the privacy of individuals, would help us all begin to see the disparities and aid us in ensuring help ensure each child has a chance to succeed.

The United States is a land of opportunity and regardless of race, ethnicity, or primary language, our students should have the resources necessary to succeed. Disaggregated data will allow us the opportunity to better see where needs are, so resources are targeted properly to give equitable tools for success to all our students.

Please oppose SB 359 and ensure that every child has an equal access to quality education. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thanks,

Nicholas Chong
Cornell University
Class of 2003