Testimony on behalf of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board
Before the Education Committee
IN OPPOSITION TO
Senate Bill 359 An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System.
March 6, 2018
Marcia DuFore, Suffield CT

Dear Representative Fleischmann, Senators Slossberg and Boucher and Distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Marcia DuFore. I am testifying as Director of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board (NCRMHB) and a register voter living the town of Suffield, CT. I am submitting this testimony to oppose SB 359, which prevents the public-school information system from disaggregating student data by ethnic subgroups.

One of the responsibilities of NCRMHB is to support local coalitions with the development of culturally competent substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion initiatives. We provide and support the use of community, regional, state, and national substance abuse and related mental health data to accurately assess needs and gaps in services, guide planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement. The ability to look at data across the lifespan (including children) in subgroups by race and ethnicity is critical to being able to track outcomes and target interventions to improve negative outcomes. Data provides us the information we need to make informed decisions and can improve and change lives.

For example, we have evidence (Abe-Kim et al. 2007), that shows that only 8.6% of Asian Americans in the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS), compared with 17.9% of the general population, seek assistance from a mental health or health care professional. This is in spite of the fact that 46% of Cambodian Americans reported high rates of PTSD (62%), major depression (51%), and contact with mental health care providers (46%). These rates are much greater than those found in the overall the Asian-American population for depression (4.5% to 11.3%) and among the general U.S. population for PTSD (3.5%) and major depression (6.7%) (Kim-Park et al. 2015).

Asian-Americans, for example Cambodian Americans, who have come to the United States as refugees are more like to have suffered trauma and report higher rates of PTSD. These traumatic experiences have a tremendous impact on educational and health outcomes.
The support for SB 359 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, while maintaining the privacy of individuals, would help us all begin to see the disparities and aid us in ensuring help ensure each child has access to the resources he or she needs 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.