Members of the Education Committee, Co-Chairs Rep. Fleischmann, Sen. Slossberg, Sen. Boucher and Ranking Member Rep. Lavielle, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jennifer Ellis, I am the Director of Research and Policy for ConnCAN, a statewide non-profit organization that has spent the last decade fighting to ensure that all kids in our state have access to a great public education.

Today, I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 359, An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in The Public School Information System. This legislation would stop the Department of Education from collecting, analyzing, and releasing student data broken down by ethnic subgroups.

Disaggregated data, broken down by race, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status, is a critical tool to identify growth, challenges, and inequities in our education system. This data is especially important given Connecticut's persistent achievement gaps that reveal ongoing and deep inequity for too many of our children. Result from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a national assessment taken annually by the nation's 4th and 8th grade students, persistently show two key trends. First, Connecticut performs well overall when compared to the rest of the country, but second, once that data is broken down, Connecticut has some of the worst achievement gaps in the nation. Of the 16 achievement gaps NAEP is able to measure, Connecticut currently ranks in the bottom 5 states on 10 measures and ranks worst on 1 measure (the achievement gap between Hispanic/Latino and White students in 8th grade math performance). Without disaggregated data, we would never have access to this critical information.

National data is important, but state data is equally important. Given our alarming gaps, we must maintain a state commitment to examining state data for each student group and adjusting our policy and practice to better meet their needs.
Combining groups of students with different needs and backgrounds in our data system would:

- Undercut our ability to assess how specific groups of children are performing;
- Prevent us from ensuring that our precious education dollars are allocated and used equitably, effectively and efficiently;
- Prevent families from understanding how their schools and districts are performing for children like their own; and
- Prevent policymakers from holding our education system accountable for inequities.

For these reasons, we urge you to reject Senate Bill 359. Without disaggregated student data, Connecticut would be left with an unclear, inaccurate, and inequitable picture of the needs of children across the state. Our children can't wait and disaggregated, transparent, and accessible data is the first step in ensuring all children have access to a great public education.

Thank you.