Re: SB 359, An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data By Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System

HB 5335, An Act Concerning the Alignment of the Coordinated State-wide Reading Plan with the State’s Two-Generational Initiative

HB 5342, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Best Practices Regarding Social-Emotional Learning

Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann, Ranking and other distinguished members of the Education Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of your Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) on the above referenced bills.

SB 359, An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data By Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System

The Commission has worked closely with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus on closing the achievement gap in our state over the last several years. Through our work with the Achievement Gap Task Force, serving as a member on the Interagency Working Group to Close the Achievement Gap, and with our partners on legislature’s reading initiative, we have made significant strides forward. These legislative initiatives have fostered an increased focus on professional development of all certified teachers engaged in reading instruction, a director of reading at the State Department of Education, and required tiered intervention support to Alliance District Schools and the Commissioner’s Network of Schools, from the State Department of Education. The Connecticut K-3 Reading Initiative (CK3LI), a partnership between the state, the University of Connecticut, Literacy How and Hill for Literacy, has had a strong impact on key reading outcomes of students in participating schools and the impacts are even greater for those exposed to multiple years of implementation. Students in CK3LI schools show greater growth in early literacy skills as they proceed through the school grades than students who do not have those services in their schools.
One of the key drivers in the work to close the achievement gap is the accessibility of data by race and ethnicity. For these reasons, the Commission opposes SB 359 and, in fact, has made recommendations in the last Results Based Accountability Report to:

"Enhance the research and evaluation arm of CK3LI in partnership with the Neag School of Education to 1) disseminate research findings from CK3LI pilot, and 2) access and aggregate data from expanded implementation of CK3LI in Alliance District schools and Commissioner’s Network schools to evaluate the impact of the initiative on change in practice and student reading achievement.”

**HB 5335, An Act Concerning the Alignment of the Coordinated State-wide Reading Plan with the State's Two-Generational Initiative**

H.B. No 5335 proposes to align the state’s K-3 reading initiative with the State’s 2GEN initiative, a whole family approach to jobs. Research shows that there is a correlation between the literacy level of a mother to the reading success of a child. Research on the science of teaching reading also shows that while 98 percent of children are able to learn to read, the literacy gap in CT continues and if children are unable to receive the assessment and specific interventions they need to learn to read by 3rd grade it is unlikely that they will catch up at the critical point where children start reading to learn.

As a result of a collaborative effort between the legislature’s Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, the State Department of Education, the NEAG School of Education, Literacy Experts, Parents, and the Private Sector, the state’s K-3 Literacy Initiative has become a national proof point for the importance of working across silo with family at the center and investing in research based and data informed practice. This is the epitome of 2GEN.

Linking literacy to the 2GEN initiative will provide an opportunity for the literacy work to attract private and national resources and technical support as a vital component to family success. It would also help us link it to critical work being done in pre-K through EvenStart, a two generational...
literacy initiative that engages parent and children together. This will ensure a continuum of asset driven, assessment focused and intervention resourced intentional instruction that will improved outcomes for children and their families.

**HB 5342, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Best Practices Regarding Social-Emotional Learning**

The Commission strongly supports the creation of a task force to focus on best practices regarding social and emotional learning. Since the State of Connecticut adopted some of the strongest anti-bullying laws in the country in 2011, the Commission has worked with the State Department of Education, the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, CAPSS, CABE, CAS, the teacher and teaching professionals unions, and the Neag School of Education at The University of Connecticut on best practices regarding social and emotional skills building aimed at prevention, as well as stress and trauma informed interventions.

In 2016, the Commission was selected to represent the state of Connecticut in the national Collaborative on Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). This collaborative, which includes approximately 29 of our sister states, has focused on aligning the state’s efforts with best practices across the country in SEL integration and implementation. Through that collaboration, we have been able to braid together various efforts in the state focused on SEL, including our SEL and the arts initiative (Stand Up and Speak Out, and “Her Song”, the Musical), SEL and drug prevention (The Courage to Speak), and integrating SEL and civic through PLTI.

Through our work with the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and Facebook’s InspireEd Initiative, we were able to bring programming and training for youth ambassadors throughout the state, and participate in the Emotion Revolution with several CT high schools at Yale.

As a result of these existing synergies, and because time is of the essence as so much of this work is developing in CT and a promising pace, we would recommend that the Committee consider working with the Commission to create this task force using the Commission’s existing standing authority to create and manage task forces with the force of the legislature. The Commission would designate a Board Liaison who would work directly with the Chair of the Task Force to appoint the listed members of the Task Force, to determine a set schedule of public meetings and questions to be addressed at each meeting, including (1) identifying successful models of social-emotional learning that are being implemented by school districts in Connecticut or other states, (2) analyzing the suspension and expulsion rates, prior to and after, a successful model has been implemented in a school district, and (3) making recommendations for how such successful models can be expanded and implemented in other school districts throughout the state. The Commission would follow the deadline proposed in this draft, with a set of report and recommendations to be submitted to the legislature’s Education Committee by January 21, 2019.

Last year, the Commission used its standing authority to create a bi-partisan task force on water safety and awareness, which to date has met several times, conducted two informative public forums on water safety, and will soon hold water safety and awareness day at the Capitol. Appointed and invited participants in the panel have also worked together on more effective ways to disseminate water safety awareness, and have surface barriers which may call for legislative or local policy changes. The Commission is prepared to engage the issue of SEL on behalf of the legislature in the same way, but in a much more timely and efficient way. In fact, the Commission could have its first fully empaneled inaugural meeting of an SEL task force prior to the close of the 2018 legislative
session. In the alternative, the Commission would ask that it be included as a member of the proposed task force.