Testimony by Dr. Gaeton F. Stella

March 8, 2018

In Support of

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

My name is Gaeton F. Stella. I reside at 4 August Lane, Trumbull Connecticut. I am a retired Superintendent from the Woodbridge School District. I have been an educator for more than 50 years and have extensive local and international experience in working with multi-cultural communities, including the Asian Community.

I support SB 359, with modifications, for the following reasons:

1. The Bill demonstrates that the state of Connecticut is proactive in seeking to prevent a type of data collection that singles out Asians by requiring identification by country of origin. I applaud this proactive step that is being taken in recognition of the fact that several states in the United States already have passed legislation to mandate an Asian Registry, and that momentum is growing for other states to do the same.

2. Schools are places that are meant to be kind and sensitive to the feelings of all members of their communities. The idea of an Asian Registry is causing great angst among members of the Asian Community in Connecticut, both parents and students --- an angst that challenges the trust that is an important ingredient in creating a positive culture in any school community. We must be sensitive to the voices that are coming from members of our Asian Community. SB 359 demonstrates that sensitivity on a state level.
3. There is no educational necessity that I can see for an Asian Registry. Every student is unique. It is the job of the school to identify where a student is on his/her learning pathway, and to provide continual growth for that student. If a child's first language is other than English, all that is needed is to know what that language is, determine what type of fluency the child has in that language, assess the student's level of ability in English and create a plan to move the student forward.

4. An Asian Registry has the potential to promote polarization among our students by placing them in a variety of subgroups. It also has the potential to reinforce ethnic stereotypes and biases.

5. This legislation protects our children from the stigmatization of being labelled as “another kind of American” in the name of data collection.

While supporting this legislation, I suggest modification of the language in the last sentence of the bill “unless...collected uniformly across the entire of population students.” I recommend that the wording be eliminated. I see more harm than good in requiring any or all segments of our student population to be required to register by country of family origin.

I, therefore, urge the Legislature to enact SB 359 with modification of the last sentence as stated above.

Thank you.

Gaeton F. Stella, Ph.D.