



Testimony of Subira Gordon Executive Director of ConnCAN
Education Committee 3/6
Regarding bills: S.B. 931, S.B. 937, S.B. 957, H.B. 7082 and H.B. 7083

Testimony on S.B. 931, S.B. 937, S.B. 957, H.B. 7082 and H.B. 7083

Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez, Ranking Member Senator McCarty and Representative Berthel, and other distinguished members of the Education Committee, my name is Subira Gordon and I am Executive Director of ConnCAN.

Today, I am here to testify in support of:

- S.B. No. 931 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PAYMENTS TO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS;
- S.B. No. 937 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS;
- S.B. No. 957 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM, PROGRAMS OF TEACHER PREPARATION AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS;
- H.B. No. 7082 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF AFRICAN- AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM; and
- H.B. No. 7083 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF PUERTO RICAN AND LATINO STUDIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

Regarding early childhood educators (S.B. 931 & S.B. 937)

The research is clear: If kids are not reading at grade level by third grade, they face an uphill battle to graduate high school, attend and graduate from college, and have the necessary skills to access high-wage careers.

Early childhood education is critical for young kids to develop phonics and phonemic awareness, catalyzing their literacy growth at an early age. Central to this development is the role of the early childhood educator. According to a [Learning Policy Institute](#) study, “Well-prepared teachers who provide engaging interactions and classroom environments that support learning” are critical to a successful early childhood education program. And, currently, we’re undervaluing their contribution to early literacy and social-emotional development.

The average early childhood educator makes just under \$39,000 a year in Connecticut, which is less than the state’s average living wage, according to a report from [MIT](#). Legislation that increases early childhood educator pay, or provides incentives, including loan forgiveness, can improve conditions for those working to improve outcomes for our youngest students. While currently, the state does not have

a mechanism to forgive student loans, this bill provides an opportunity to start a conversation on how to make loan forgiveness a reality.

Regarding computer science curriculum (S.B. 937)

Smart investments in computer science education are necessary to ensure Connecticut kids can compete for tomorrow's jobs. According to the [App Association](#), the computer science field will have over 1 million open jobs by 2024. Unfortunately, only 10% of all schools offer computer science course ([Code.org report](#)).

Connecticut is already falling behind our neighboring states when it comes to post-recession job growth, and if we fail to have a workforce that's adequately prepared to fill jobs that are being created, our state's economy will never catch up. For example, New York has already "pushed for a greater focus on computer science and coding in education, and last year's budget included funding to train teachers for computer science." ([NY Governor's Office](#))

Access to computer science courses is also an issue of equity. Currently, the ratio of men to women in the computer science field is 4:1. By expanding access, more women have the opportunity to learn about and become computer scientists.

Computer science is vital to developing a 21st-century workforce and this bill ensures that Connecticut leads on this issue.

Regarding African-American and Puerto Rican and Latino Studies curriculum (H.B. 7082 & H.B. 7083)

Historically, African-American and Puerto Rican and Latino studies have been constricted to a single month. This must change.

All students benefit when they learn about the history and ongoing contributions of African-American and Puerto Rican & Latino communities. Bridgeport Public Schools, starting this academic year, has already made the change, requiring high school students to take a semester of African-American Studies, Latin American Studies or Perspectives on Race to graduate. Other districts around the country have done the same. "Students in Philadelphia are required to take African-American history to graduate. In Los Angeles, students must take an ethnic studies class." ([Associated Press](#), October 8, 2018)

Connecticut has an opportunity to lead on this issue. By requiring African-American and Puerto Rican & Latino studies, we are saying to our public school students, of all races and backgrounds, that this coursework is as important as other core courses. H.B. 7082 and H.B. 7083 improve curriculum equity and justice for Connecticut's public school kids.

About ConnCAN

Founded in 2005, ConnCAN is leading an advocacy movement to ensure that all kids in The Constitution State have access to a high-quality education, regardless of their address.

Our work to improve education in Connecticut springs from our belief in the immense potential found within every child and our responsibility as citizen advocates to do everything we can to ensure we have an education system that lives up to this potential.

We strive to be resourceful and nimble as we advance the changes our kids deserve. We aim to see every win—and every setback—as an opportunity to learn what’s working today and envision what might be possible tomorrow. We know we don’t have all the answers and that we can only succeed by constantly testing our assumptions, working in close collaboration with others and investing in an inclusive culture enlivened by diverse viewpoints from across our state.

ConnCAN is a branch of [50CAN: The 50-State Campaign for Achievement Now.](#)