



Testimony of Subira Gordon Executive Director of ConnCAN

Education Committee 3/13/2019

Regarding bills: SB 1018, SB 1019, SB 1020, SB 1021, SB 1022, SB 1023

**Testimony on SB 1018, SB 1019, SB 1020, SB 1021, SB 1022, SB 1023 & HB 7149**

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.

I am here to testify on the following bills:

- SB 1018: (RAISED) EDUCATION. AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP;
- SB 1019: (RAISED) EDUCATION. AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL LITERACY;
- SB 1020: (RAISED) EDUCATION. AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL EQUITY;
- SB 1021: (RAISED) EDUCATION. AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PILOT PROGRAM;
- SB 1022: (RAISED) EDUCATION. AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION;
- SB 1023: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPELLED STUDENTS BY BOARDS OF EDUCATION; and
- HB 7149 AN ACT BOLSTERING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT

**SB1018:**

ConnCAN supports legislation that makes school data available to the public. Parent and students have the right to know how their school and district perform in order to make the right decisions for their educational journey. Too often are students moving through school and then realize in the 11th or 12th grade that they don't have the information necessary to make a comprehensive plan for the next step in life whether that be college or career.

Research shows that data in the hands of families can change the trajectory of a student's life. For example, schools in Chicago share data with families to tailor their educational experience based on their unique skill-set. The school partners with families to create a plan, implement that plan and track the student's development using actionable data. The state of Connecticut should make public-facing data reports to help families evaluate their own academic progress, and compare with their peers, other schools and districts. This will increase awareness among families to know exactly how their educational experience compares with others.

**[SB1019](#):**

Less than 6 in 10 (55.3%) students in Connecticut are on track for college and career in reading. For some communities, the news is even more dire, where less than 1 in 10 are on track. [Research shows](#) that students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers. This must change.

ConnCAN supports the concepts of SB1019 because it provides more coordination and support for schools to move the needle on literacy rates.

Connecticut has implemented many literacy programs and supports in the past, with varying levels of success. ConnCAN hopes that this bill addresses the gap between policy and implementation through technical support and coordination.

**[SB1020](#), [HB 7149](#), and [SB1022](#):**

Connecticut's student population is rapidly diversifying, yet its teacher population is not. Right now, less than 10% of teachers identify as people of color. This is a problem.

Students benefit when teachers reflect diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Research shows that students of color, taught by teachers of color, perform better on a variety of academic outcomes, including: school attendance, retention, standardized test scores, advanced-level course enrollment, discipline rates, high school graduation, and college enrollment.

We know that minority teacher recruitment and retention is possible in Connecticut. Right now several Connecticut districts have increased the diversity of their workforce.

- Six districts have about 50% or more administrators of color: Jumoke Academy, New Haven Public Schools, Park City Prep Charter School, New Beginnings Family Academy, Highville Charter School, and Hartford Public Schools.
- Six districts have about 25% or more teachers of color: Jumoke Academy, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport Achievement First, Bloomfield Public Schools, Achievement First Hartford, and Bridgeport Public Schools.

The Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force has made progress to reduce barriers for high-quality teaching candidates of color to join the profession. SB 1022 recommends finish line grants and student loan reimbursement, reciprocity agreements with all other states and changes to certification eligibility for those receiving a bachelor's degree outside of education. ConnCAN recommends that SB 1022 continues to address systemic barriers that teaching candidates of color face, including but not limited to GPA thresholds.

SB 1020 addresses today's concern about culturally responsive pedagogy and practice. All teachers, regardless of the background, should understand and be well-versed in culturally responsive pedagogy and practice. This will increase commonalities between students and teachers and support relationship building, which is essential to student academic and social-emotional progress.

### **SB1021:**

ConnCAN is excited to see a pilot program for community schools. This pilot could uncover new and interesting ways to develop diverse stakeholder engagement channels that can be scaled or replicated in other parts of the state. Additionally, by targeting Alliance school districts, SB 1021 invests in historically underserved schools. Additionally, ConnCAN believes that parent representation on each Community School committee is beneficial to parent engagement and positive school climate. ConnCAN recommends that the parents not be employed by the school, however.

There are opportunities to expand the makeup of the steering committee, however. Currently, there is no parent, community or public representation. If the plan is to increase engagement across stakeholder groups, it is essential to include representatives from all key groups.

### **SB 1023:**

In many instances, students who have been expelled from a public school are most vulnerable to economic and social insecurity. In the long run, expelled students without a set plan in place, face employment, housing and personal hardship. Connecticut must support all students, regardless of their experience with the public education system, to be prepared for college and career. This includes literacy and math support, high school graduation, and tangible opportunities to gain employment.

Schools must have plans in place to support students they choose to expel. Those students deserve educational opportunities and Connecticut cannot allow the student's past actions to serve as a life determinant. This is an issue of equity. If we say to expelled students that they do not deserve a plan for their future, it sends a dangerous message to our most vulnerable.

ConnCAN supports SB 1023 as it creates a level playing field for all students, no matter their past actions. All students have the right to learn and Connecticut should ensure that every child receives a qualified plan to get them to college and career.

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### **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.](#)