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SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Good Morning and welcome to today's Education Public Hearing. We are going to convene the meeting but I have to inform you of the Rules of this Committee and they are very specific. So I'm gonna tell ya, I am a teacher and you're in my classroom. When you come up to testify you have two minutes to speak. Now, after two minutes you're gonna hear a bell, let 'em know what it sounds like. Bell? I want to be very clear. You got the bell over there? You're gonna hear a bell and once you hear the bell, your next words out your mouth should be, "therefore in conclusion" but if you're prepared ahead of time, you will know you should be done by that bell. Okay? Everybody understand the rules? All right, great job. Bobby.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Good Morning everyone and Happy International Women's Day. [Applause]. And I truly believe that one day we will have a woman president. Just waiting for that day [Applause]. But I want to thank the members that are present, hopefully this will be smooth and quick process today [Laughs] and I also want to welcome the Mashantucket Pequots that are present today because of one of our very important Bills that we have for Public Hearing [Applause]. And I am going to turn it over now to Senator Berthel who is going to read out some interesting rules for this hearing room.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good Morning everyone and welcome to all of our visitors. We look forward to a productive Public Hearing this morning.

In the interest of safety I would ask that you note the location of and access to the exits in this hearing room. The two doors through which you entered the room are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In the event of emergency, the door behind the Legislators can also be used. In the event of an emergency please walk quickly to the nearest exit. After exiting the room go to your left and exit the building by the main entrance or follow the exit signs to one of the other exits.

Please quickly exit the building and follow any instructions from the Capital Police. Do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised that it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement please remain in the Hearing Room and stay away from the exit doors until an "All Clear" announcement is heard. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Senator. Do you have any word to say, Representative McCarty?

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would just like to welcome everyone today to the hearing and I'm looking forward to hearing your testimony. So welcome.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you, so with that said, first up to testify we have Commissioner Beth Bye. You get more than two minutes [Laughs].

COMMISSIONER BYE: I've asked my Chief Legal Counsel, Mike Curley and Director of Licensing Deb Johnson to join me in case questions come up. So, Good Morning, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarthy and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Beth Bye. I am the Commissioner at the Office of Early Childhood. I am here today to testify concerning our three agency bills - H.B. 5216, 5218, and 5219 - and four other early childhood proposals - H.B. 5213, 5220, 5222, and 3579.

I will start with our three agency bills, which are proposed after much thought and discussion within the OEC and with the Governor's Office and the Office of Policy & Management. Our proposals support the health and safety of children in early childhood settings - family child care homes, group child care homes, child care centers, and youth camps. As the agency that is responsible for the licensure of these childhood programs, we place the basic health and safety of children as our highest priority.

The first Bill I want to discuss is 5216 AN ACT ELIMINATING THE LICENSURE EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING CHILD CARE SERVICES. H.B. 5216 would improve the health and safety of children by requiring child care programs that are operated by various organizations to be licensed. The Bill seeks to eliminate the licensure exemptions for the following programs: nationally chartered boy' and girls' clubs that are exclusively for school-age children; Solar Youth Inc.; Cardinal Sheehan Center; Organized Parents Make a Difference (OPMAD); and Leadership, Education and Athletics Partnership (LEAP).

The regulations that govern licensing establish the minimum health and safety requirements for programs that must meet and are designed to protect the health, safety and well-being of participating children. Licensing ensures accountability, oversight, and transparency of these baseline standards in critical areas such as abuse and neglect, staff-child ratios, staff qualifications, health care, educational requirements and physical plant safety. Over 4,000 child care programs throughout the state, including youth camps, are licensed and uphold the standards outlined in legislation.

The fact that some child care programs are not required to be licensed creates a lack of equity and fairness when regulations that serve children of the same age and needs are not applied universally.

Children served by unlicensed exempt programs do not benefit from the same level of health and safety protection offered by licensed programs through the conduct of staff criminal record checks, ongoing

unannounced inspections and complaint investigations by an outside source. All children, regardless of the financial status of the child care program they attend, should be afforded the same health and safety protections.

At the OEC we receive complaints from parents, child care staff, local officials and others about programs that are some are licensed and license-exempt. Such allegations involve such things as child abuse and neglect, health and safety hazards, and lack of supervision. While these allegations may be particularly alarming, the OEC has no authority to investigate such concerns when allegations are made against license-exempt programs that fall outside the OEC's oversight. We are concerned that these programs have no outside health and safety oversight to protect children in their care. In multiple cases, the organization sought and secured the licensure exemption through legislation after the OEC responded to a complaint, investigated, and determined the program needed to be licensed. So we have had discussions with programs and we are open to conversations around some of the challenges the programs face because we want children to be in high quality programs.

We are available to provide technical assistance to these programs to support them through the licensure process and we can help them identify what they see as hurdles to licensure and work to find solutions.

I wanted to just mention two things that are not exactly in my testimony about this one is that child care regulations are in the review process right now. I approved them like three weeks after starting. They have been through the Attorney

General, through the Office of Policy Management, they take time and we made changes upon those recommendations. Now they have been back through that process again and they are on their way to Public Hearing. In those regulations are some of the concerns that after school programs have raised and there will be a public comment period during which they can say we agree with this change in the regulation for after school programs or we disagree with this change. They are allowed to testify about changes.

I also wanted to mention that because I've read some of the testimony overnight and I wanted to remind you all because some of you weren't hear but in 2011 the legislature passed a Bill and directed child care licensing to look at areas when programs are in schools they are some things in licensing that seem duplicative, that's too much, they're already schools for the kids during the day and so we undertook that process and there were 17 items and I'm happy to get a copy of this to the Committee Members that we changed and said that if you're in a public school or a private school then these 17 items no longer apply to you because you already have to pass a lot of these tests for that reason. But that was a legislative process that said, you are to look at this and make these standards match up better for after school programs. So we've done that.

We also, I think in good faith, looked at the licensing regulations and we are going through the reg review process for this. But I will say that this Bill really comes after the series of articles that came out this summer by *Hurst Media* and Ken Dickson around the boys and girls clubs particularly

an article from August of 15 that said, that there was an oversight bill in the legislature several years ago and the boys and girls clubs were the organization that fought against it and this articles saying they fought the oversight but it seems like, and this is not at all about the boys and girls clubs, I know that they do incredible work for families and children across Connecticut. They keep kids safe but this article just shines a light on the fact that when you have exempt programs from these standards that they are not getting the same level of inspections, they are not having the background checks and fingerprints and so our goal is to have oversight but also be open to have conversations around what should oversight, how can we improve oversight in a way that it doesn't get in the way of you serving children and families frankly because I just know how valuable these programs are and I've spoken to LEAP and I called Solar Youth, they called me back and I didn't get a chance to talk to them. But I just want to express to this Committee our willingness to sit down with the programs in the next few weeks and say what are the barriers because I look at this legislative in 2011, it lead to significant improvements and it said child care, you know, two, and three and four year-old regulations don't match up for 13, 14 and 15-year-old children. And so I feel like in good faith that was a good legislative proposal. Our office address that in many ways but in my conversations with these organizations it seems like there are other things that we can discuss, many of which are in the reg review process. So I wanted to take the most time on this Bill because it had by far the most testimony and I'm happy to answer your

questions and then I'll go through quickly the other items.

House Bill 5219 is AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH CAMPS that is looking to require licensed youth camps to have staff 18 years and older undergo fingerprint-based background checks. This is very similar to a Bill that is before Children's for some of you.

The current CCDF law requires that programs that receives Care 4 Kids do these criminal background checks including fingerprints and we have some concerns that if we create two different kinds of background checks, some for programs that take Care 4 Kids and others, another rule for programs that don't that there will be a disincentive to accept children who receive Care 4 Kids and camps will just say, well we're not gonna take Care 4 Kids and more because then we have to do the fingerprints, etc.

And I also want to state and I have some staff here that we've been working very hard on improving the speed with which we process background checks. We've met with the Camp Youth Association and the Camp Advisory board to discuss this proposal and we think sort of like, I think we'll be true with the afterschool programs. We've made some progress in those conversations and we will continue and I am happy to answer questions about that.

House Bill 5218, I'll just briefly, I'm happy to answer questions about these. A lot of these are technical changes. But I want to stress that in Section 1, this is AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD. Section 1 would prohibit an individual 18 years of age or older seeking employment in a group child care home or child care center from beginning work

until that individual's criminal background check is cleared. This part of the federal requirements for Care 4 Kids. The other thing we're doing related to this we are asking you move the age at which people need to be fingerprinted from 16 to 18 because we are spending a lot of money doing fingerprints on 16-18-year-olds, we've done some really important criminal justice reform in Connecticut and we don't believe that children younger than 18 should have to go through the fingerprint criminal background checks. So that is another part of that Bill. I can answer questions on the rest of it

And then I'll move on to House Bill 5213 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A PILOT PROGRAM FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD BUSINESS INCUBATOR MODEL. This is a proposal out of the Governor's Council on Women and Girls and it would allow five communities to use a family child care license in a place that is not a residence and group home and family child care to try to expand access to child care in Connecticut. And we think this is a really neat way to say, let's look at the regulations that are there for family child care and say, what if those weren't in a home and we could create smaller child care centers that fall under those regulations but they don't have to live in the house. We think this great. As a State we are short 50,000 spaces for infants and toddlers for parents who need to go to work so we need some innovative solutions and we are really grateful for this proposal from the Council on Women and Girls.

House Bill 5220, this Bill has some really important provisions for providing Care 4 Kids for parents in job training and even start helping looking to move families of lower income up the education ladder. As with the case last year, and the year before, and

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the year before that, is that there are significant fiscal costs that are not reflected in the budget for these programs so we cannot support them at this time.

House Bill 5222 - AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE 4 KIDS PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES. This would expand Care 4 Kids eligibility for a three-month period to families with children who are homeless. This like the others is not in the Governor's budget. I will say that the Early Childhood is highly focused on families with young children. We have spent the last six months with some national consultants looking at this problem. The number of families who are on the brink of homelessness or homeless with children six and under is a very large problem in this State. We are investing some dollars in homeless diversion for children six and under. And we also believe that child care is very important so some of the background and research we're doing is to look at policy initiatives next year. But it's not in the budget currently.

Next, I'll just quickly touch on House Bill 5379. This is a Bill that is attempting to address and inequity in our child care system right now. In Connecticut, I hope I won't be saying this in front of you in two years, but in Connecticut we have eight different funding streams that are funding child care each with slightly different rules and slightly different ways to implement and there are some inequities in that system. So School Readiness providers can have up to 40 percent of the students in their program have wages about 75 percent of the state median income whereas State funded center need to have 100 percent of their families live below 70

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percent of the state median income. For those of you who've been here a while, the CDC come out of DSS as a DSS Child Care Program and School Readiness came from the legislature, I believe but in the Office of Early Childhood and the State Department of ED and so that had different legacy rules and we've been working to align those and so this Bill is an attempting to say if School Readiness Programs get to take 40 percent above 75 percent of SMI then we believe CDC should be able to take at least 30, 25-30 percent about SMI.

It really does try to address inequity in policy for child care providers who are struggling to hold on but it would result in fewer spaces for families with low incomes. Of the approximately 4,400 available spaces under the CDC program this Bill could potentially reduce by 1,200 spaces capacity available for low income families. Given the significant need in the State of Connecticut for child care this Bill could exacerbate those situations. But we are happy to sit down with the Child Day Care programs and discuss this and we are very sympathetic to the inequity. So, I'll stop there and I'm happy to answer questions. That was a lot.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Commissioner. Wish we had more time to.

COMMISSIONER BYE: I tried to be quick.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): That was good. So going back to I think it was 5379 you stated 1,200 spaces for low income families could be affected? And presently the rate is what, 60/40?

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COMMISSIONER BYE: In School Readiness it is 60/40. I'm glad you asked this question. So School Readiness they are allowed to take up to 40 percent of families about 75 percent of the state median income which we all know child care is basically unaffordable for everyone and if you live between 75 and 100 percent of the state median income you are still really struggling to afford child care. But in actuality 90 percent of children served in School Readiness live below 75 percent of the state median income. So School Readiness liaisons and communities, because School Readiness is administered at the local level. Localities are prioritizing low income families so they may make their own rules about, like I know in West Hartford they go to 40 percent of SMI first. First we will take all the children below 40 percent of SMI and then move up. But communities could take up to 40 percent above 75 percent of the state median income but that is not the reality.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Right. But if we move in this direction it would affect mostly low income families?

COMMISSIONER BYE: Yes, that's the concern. I think the state funded centers have a very fair claim that the polices don't match up. They are paid less per student and they are serving critical populations and so they are saying we need help somewhere and so I think that was why they came to this Committee for this, to try to supplement with families that could perhaps pay full fare.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Going to 5220, which is expanding Care 4 Kids for Even Start and secondary education programs do you have like an estimate of

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what the costs would be if we were to implement this?

COMMISSIONER BYE: I don't have a fiscal note right now. And this is, I think is the intent of this Bill is to be very narrow and we will support these particular job training programs and Even Start but I know if you open Care 4 Kids to all people in job training the fiscal note is about \$40 million dollars. But I do not know the fiscal note on this. My guess is if this passes out of Committee my office will be asked to develop a fiscal note and then you will have one.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Yeah, cause I think the focus here is just to start it off like you had stated, you know, may a person that is going into manufacturing training or which the Governor is big on, you know. So that's a conversation I guess we can have afterwards as well. And in going to Bill 5222 expanding it to homeless families, so we know that the McKinney Vento expands the definition of homelessness, now you are tapping into families that are living with other family members or friends and so forth, but I think what we're looking at in this particular Bill is families that are presently in shelters and had been in shelters for maybe two to three weeks and are actively looking for jobs and correct me, the estimate I'm getting is about 400 families statewide and that could be even lower. Do you know what an estimated cost would be?

COMMISSIONER BYE: Well the average Care 4 Kids family costs a little over \$6,000 dollars so you just need to multiply that factor. I would say it might be interesting for this Committee to invite or have a conversation with Lisa Tucker-Bates because

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they are doing a pilot, the Governor's Council on Housing, I'm not gonna all the councils, I keep 'em right but the Governor's Council focused on housing is working on a pilot in Fairfield County that will start, I believe in August, and looking at the barriers and very much focused on families with young children we are using some of our preschool development grant funds to support that work, to look at the system and as our sort of consultants have looked at what families are facing who are homeless a big part of the problem is this dis-coordinated services. They get one thing but not the other and child care kept coming up as a core issue for families getting a home, getting a job. So I think you have your finger on the pulse of what's most important but there might be a way to look at, speak with her about what are they looking at in terms of child care for that pilot.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay, thank you for that answer. Also implementation, well what we were talking about, you stated about the background checks moving them from 16 to 18 and so leave 18-year-olds that applying, you know, trying to get a job at youth camps, how long is the process to get, you know, the information back that they are cleared.

COMMISSIONER BYE: And just to be clear, we are moving from, we're removing 16 and 17 year-olds from the requirement to get background checks. We are looking to begin it at age 18. About a year ago it was four months. So if you're trying to run a summer camp and hire, it's a real problem. We've invested a little over a million dollars with our federal funds in working to speed up that process and working with, well DCF gave us some good

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guidance to speed it up but Commissioner Rovella has worked really hard with us and we are now down to getting background checks back in two to four weeks.

So it has been a big change and then there's another couple of steps, it's not perfect but there are many, there are many wheels in motion to continue to speed that and DES has a contract for new background check system that will be rolling out in the next six to 12 months will return fingerprints in 24 hours.

But I'm going to ask Mike Curley our Legal Director who has been leading on this, did I miss anything? Did I cover it? Okay.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): So they still have to wait two to four weeks so I would imagine that these youth camps would have to start the hiring process way in advance.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Yes.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And who covers the cost?

COMMISSIONER BYE: Well just like child care programs the program, the cost is borne by the programs or the individual. Some places have the individual say, if you want to work here you've gotta get a fingerprint and it used to be \$22.00 dollars and then the legislature when they were looking for more revenue added to fees and this is one of the fees that went way up and the fees go to the general fund so they don't go to pay for the fingerprints. We are actually using a lot of federal dollars to add staff and move things along and we are actually going to embed a staff member at that desk who will just be doing our background checks there. That's what DCF's been doing to speed

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things and we have that in process right now working on that.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): So the cost can range to about \$75-\$80 dollars?

COMMISSIONER BYE: It's like \$88.00 dollars a person, it's very high. And I think, you know, the legislature and the Governor's office over the next couple of years, this was an issue I think that really needs attention because these are some of the lowest paid workers in the State who are sometime bearing the brunt and then talk about a margin, camps and child care programs have a very thing margin to be covering these as well.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And that's always been my concern to particularly with teachers going from one city to another city to work and they're told at that other town that they have to do the fingerprinting and I just feel that there is so much redundancies when it comes to these background checks when we should have, and I'm pretty sure we have a data system in place where they can look into this. So I mean that is a whole other conversation we can have.

COMMISSIONER BYE: And the cost is a barrier. I just want to be clear like from our office we think, we wouldn't be proposing this if we didn't think it was really important to protect child health and safety. There have been too many stories and too many reports of bad behavior by adults and one of the Representatives was testifying at the Children's Committee and had really daunting testimony about chat rooms where predators were talking about where you could work without background checks. Like this is serious stuff and we believe that background

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checks are sort of the gold standard and we believe they're important. So I don't like that they're so expensive but I think they are important for child safety and even more than being, you know, getting caught with a fingerprint, you're not gonna apply for a job if you know you're gonna be fingerprinted. We see it as a deterrent as much as a "gotcha."

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you and just one more. We're going back to 5216 the licensure exemption. Do you like have an estimate of statewide how many programs this would have an effect on and would this actually, with some of these programs be forced to close their doors due to this exemption?

COMMISSIONER BYE: Well I can't speak to what will happen, you know, with the programs. I am sure they will be here to testify today about some of the challenges that they face. I do know the specific ones that have asked one at a time to be exempt from licensing and that is increasing not decreasing. I don't know how many boys and girls clubs are in Connecticut. Deb do you know that? No. But I do know for example there are some boys and girls clubs that are licensed and they are operating. There are hundreds and hundreds of afterschool programs that are operating that are licensed. And I don't know what the Afterschool Association weighed in here but so, we just believe that having an unannounced inspection one time a year and having someone check the physical clients, having certain requirements for teachers, are really important and parents expect a level of safety and we see it as our job to ensure that.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay, thank you. I think that was it. You have any questions?

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SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you for your testimony. I just wanted to weigh in, I mean I'm not the Early Childhood expert, my colleague is but the exemption, I would really like to see if you guys can work this out with these organizations. I have been approached by a couple of them and they expressed their concerns and I'm sure they're gonna do the same thing today because clearly there is a difference between Early Childhood, I mean daycare, child daycare and a boys and girls clubs where you have 15 and 16 year old's and ratios clearly is a differentiation but I would really like to see if you guys can work this out. We're all for safety. We all want to make sure our kids are safe but we also know there are nonprofit organizations and the cost shouldn't be a deterrent but the fact that we're gonna change requirements without having the proper time in advance and need for those to happen but if you guys can work this out I would rather see that happen than just saying to see these organizations have to close their doors or hire a whole lot of staff that might not get paid for and therefore it they can't for 'em then everyone loses. So I would have to see that happen, I will tell you that this has to be worked out as we move forward. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good Morning, Commissioner. It's good to see you today. Thank you for your testimony. You covered a lot of ground in quite a few, in a short amount of time. I do have just a few question and some comments regarding what Senator McCrory just spoke to

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specific to HB 5216. And I think one of the questions that was already asked is do we know specific to boys and girls clubs there are in Connecticut and what the impact would be, and I guess we can collectively.

COMMISSIONER BYE: We don't regulate them so, you know, we can go right into our licensing system and tell you every other afterschool program but we don't. But my guess is they will share that information and I think they will be here in good faith today as well.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Yeah, or course I agree. And the reason why I think it is important to know that is because when we look at possibly adding that particular constituency so to speak, those specific clubs to regulation under your office, clearly there will have to be an increase in staffing and an increase in expense to your office in order to address that. And I think that we, as Senator McCrory spoke to I think that would be important for this Committee to know as we consider moving this legislation in general forward because I think the boys and girls clubs are probably the largest part of what, if I understand this correctly as to what will be affected by this possible change through the intent of 5216. Can you speak to, do you have any and I know you can't speak specifically to a complaint but do you have recent complaints about boys and girls clubs in Connecticut?

COMMISSIONER BYE: Well we don't investigate those. Those would be investigated by the Department of Children and Families because if we regulated them I could give you details about complaints but because we don't. The other thing I want to be clear about

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is that we're not looking to change regulations or add anything. These are programs that specifically came to the legislature and said, we want an exemption from licensing. They all had, you know, fell under that prevue according to the current regulations and came and said we want an exemption. So I don't feel like we're adding anything beyond saying we don't believe there should be, these programs should be exempt. So I just want to make that point clear. If we believe we have, if you took them out the Statues and some of them would not, some of them would fall outside I'm sure if we looked at their activities but given the current law we believe most would fall under our oversight but they have specifically sought out legislative cutouts to not have oversight.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Yes, thank you for the clarification regarding removing the exemption and I think that is an important distinction to make. And I think that when we are looking specifically at that group, and the reason why they sought, and I wasn't here when the exemption, I'm guessing that was before my time in the legislature. I'm guessing the reason why they sought that exemption was because they did not fit comfortably into the mold if you will for day care centers, you know, and boys and girls clubs are not day care centers by definition they are afterschool programs which, you know, we could probably spend the rest of the day going back and forth on that.

You know, my understanding of and looking at testimony, and speaking with some of directors of the boys and girls clubs in Connecticut they current adhere to a national set of standards that comes from the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. And those

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standards include annual safety assessments. They include onsite inspections. They also have safety committees at the local board level in the clubs so I'm wondering if there could be as Senator McCrory eluded to a moment ago as we try to work this out if there could be perhaps an acceptance of or review of what those standards are that their national organization is holding them accountable to because they are required in order to stay an active member in good standing with their National Club to adhere to those rules. So maybe we find a way to adopt what they're already doing and not necessarily require them to be licensed as a child care service, cause I really don't see when I'm looking at everything that they are child care services under the letter of the law but. And I don't want to beat this one to death. I thank you for your comments on that for the clarification as well and I look forward to the Committee having robust discussion going forward to see if we can work something out. So thank you, Commissioner and Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Senator.
Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and welcome Commissioner. It's always good to see you and thank you for your very detailed testimony on some of these very important issues. I do also want to just echo a little bit of what Senator McCrory said and hopefully we can find some middle ground so that we can really not hurt the boys and girls clubs but also find a way to be sure that we are meeting the appropriate standards. And you mentioned those 17 standards that you have. If you could.

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COMMISSIONER BYE: Yes, and I do think that if you look at, I don't know, it's in Section 19-A 79-7(a) of the regulations for Connecticut State Agencies, I do think that what happened in 2011 was a really thoughtful State policy from the legislature addressing some of what Senator Berthel and Senator McCrory have asked about, that is you know, directing the oversight agency to look at these programs as they are as afterschool programs and just to be clear we do license afterschool programs. But when I share this with you I think you will see, you know, that's a legislative change that still kept the existing regulatory structure in Connecticut overseeing child day care, overseeing afterschool but directed us to sort of do what you are suggesting look at those codes. We can't move to a system where an agency or organization oversees itself. We just can't go there. And I think parents in Connecticut have certain standards and expectations that if there is a program somebody is looking over it. But I do think if we look what happened in 2011 that could be a good roadmap for just the kind of work you all are calling for.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you and we appreciate that because as you pointed out clearly that this has generated a lot of interest and we just don't want to hurt those clubs that are very valuable so we want to be sure that we find a way to work together.

I also would like to comment on 5220 and did I hear you correctly if we're looking, because I know the direction is to try to move toward keeping our parents working and allowing them to continue and I know the Even Start Program is a much smaller comparatively speaking so did you mention, if I

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heard it correctly that it would cost close to \$40 million dollars to do all of the programs that would help keep the parents, if we look at the school.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Yeah, \$38 million dollars to support families if we paid for child care while they were in school or work force training.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): And would you be able to, I think you said that you would do that just to know what the Even Start because I think that takes on a different.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Even Start is a tiny program.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): I would hope that.

COMMISSIONER BYE: I am happy to look at that.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you and then the other one I believe its 5379 looking at the median income, raising that eligibility. I think you made the assessment that would really hurt some of our lower income families but I can tell you just down in Southeastern Connecticut where we're really getting ready and looking at new jobs with EB coming in there that there are an awful lot of families and I'm hearing directly from the community action agencies that are right there and they can't afford any other kind of care so I'm hoping that we can continue to look at that and see what we can do with that population without hurting the other children that absolutely need and we need to Care 4 Kids there. So I hope there is, we can as we go forward find a solution to that as well.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Yes, I'm happy to discuss that with you and in that region specifically we have some ideas.

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REP. MC CARTY (38TH): And I do also just a comment appreciate because even after these many years and very interested in protecting our early child care program with the various funding streams is quite complicated.

COMMISSIONER BYE: We've got to make that simpler.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): If you could get a chart at some point.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Sure, I can bring that chart to the Committee with the funding streams.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): That would be wonderful.

COMMISSIONER BYE: I'm just looking at Maggie, we can get that? Yeah.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you. Good Morning, Commissioner. As always good to see you. Thank you for all your testimony. I missed a little bit of your testimony, I was in another room but I wanted to talk to you a little bit about the camp, the summer camp program, HB 5219. I was there with your testimony in Children also. I've just a couple of questions. And I might have missed this, I missed this in your testimony. I actually used to be involved with camps and we didn't have to American Camp certified but we wanted to be, the American Camping Association. That was the selling point of our camping as you would expect regulations and requirements were stiff but important. And obviously we all want the safety you talked about

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for our kids. And I like the idea of the background checks for sure. But the fingerprint thing is just, it just seems like for a lot of small camps that could be quite expensive and I'm concerned to.

In the summer camps are having a hard time finding kinds unless that has changed in the last year. It's been a problem especially with the numbers of our students in that age group is really gotten smaller. So, and you did say that the fingerprinting could be done in 24 hours contrary to what it is now. I just don't understand why can't the background checks without the fingerprints be sufficient and I might have missed that part of your testimony, I apologize?

COMMISSIONER BYE: I'll ask Michael Curley to expand on this if needed, but it's the gold standard. It is, there is a reason that the federal government is requiring states, all states to do fingerprint based background checks for child care providers who receive federal funds. Mike, I don't know if you can speak to the difference. That is sort of my answer. He knows all the details.

MICHAEL CURLEY: The guidance from our federal partners is it's ensuring that we're capturing any conviction that might be missed through a name and date of birth search. So there may be gaps in the systems where with the fingerprint based search you might capture a crime that wasn't caught just by searching by name and date of birth.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): So then adding this component is really connected to federal funding for Care 4 Kids, correct? So you would actually lose funding.

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MICHAEL CURLEY: Yes.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): If you didn't do this piece.

COMMISSIONER BYE: We have to do it for programs that accept Care 4 Kids, that is a requirement. We don't have to do it for programs that don't take Care 4 Kids but where we land on this is if we think it's important, we think it's important. If we think background checks are important and we think they are important and we think they are important. They play a critical deterrent role and a check role.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): And I thank you for that. I didn't understand that. So every camp would require to do the background checks which most of 'em do now and add this component. But I look in the Bill and it looks like there are some exceptions, state run camps and municipalities, why would they be exempt from this, why aren't they being treated the same way?

COMMISSIONER BYE: Well specifically it is the DDS Camps and those camps are, they already are doing those background checks for State DDS camps, those are already in force and as for municipalities I said this at the Children's Committee there is a broad exemption for municipalities. We believe that if background checks are important, background checks are important. But this body and previous governors have chosen to exempt municipal programs. I don't know why. I'm sure there are a lot of reasons but we're addressing what we have regulatory authority over with this proposal.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you for that and Commissioner I agree with you. I'm usually the

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first to try to protect communities from having to spend any more money but we're talking safety here and it does, it would bother me that we would require it of our private not for profit camps, our YMCA camps and not of our municipalities, especially if it's we believe in it we should be doing it. We should be doing it for every, it should be one way for everyone. I think the special exemptions are, I don't see if we're gonna do it we need to do it. So thank you for your comments, appreciate it.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Haines.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Hi, Good Morning. Thank you for being here today, Commissioner. Just a couple of questions. How many kids are served in the Care 4 Kids Program?

COMMISSIONER BYE: Currently we have about 12,000 families, I believe that translates to about 18,000 children.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Great, great. I just had no idea and just wanted to know that. My question really stems, go back to what Noreen was talking about and with the background checks and the fingerprinting, I know my personal experience with camps has been Girl Scouts who also run afterschool programs but either way, a lot of their staff come from international and what they do is they actually go to somewhere over in Europe and they go to a camping association where staffing is what they do and they may be doing background checks, I would imagine they do, again I don't know what their fingerprinting is versus what we do here in the United States but because we're talking about different countries now is there any kind of

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grandfathering in for what they do there cause these camps rely on these international staff?

COMMISSIONER BYE: They really do and I'm glad you raised this, cause when we met with them this was a big issue. And we have talked internally and as we move this forward we really know that in 2020, you go through extensive background checks to get a Visa to come to this country. A great deal of these campers are under 18 and workers are under 18 so we will be working with the Camp Association to work that out. The only sort of caveat is again we don't want to create disincentives for hiring American youth, youth in Connecticut. But I think these counselors are brought over because of some of the workforce shortages.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Absolutely and I also think, you know, there's soccer camps, I mean there's so many, you know, wonderful programs that are out there as far as camps go for kids that as much as we, you know, safety is obviously a big, big issue we also have to look at, you know, what my colleagues have already said is that some of these groups are already doing background checks of that they are and I think if we can work with them as opposed to, you know, making mandates against them, we can all make sure our kids are safe. So thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Comey.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hello, Commissioner it's good to see you. I just wanted to bounce back to the 5222, the Homeless Expansion Care 4 Kids. You know, I've been to New Reach in New Haven and they are located in an old convent and

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there was, when I was there, I noticed that there was, child care room that had been originally a child care center when it was a convent and now it was just sort of a playroom. There was a significant, middle of the day, or middle of the late morning and there was a significant number I would say of parents, mothers with young children that were multiple young children. And so, you know, in an access issue as far as them being able to move forward in their lives, I was wondering if there was room for possibly because Care 4 Kids money, is my understanding, is a little bit more flexible than say School Readiness funds or things like that, right.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Yes.

REP. COMEY (102ND): To I was wondering if there was an opportunity where we could possibly help them out, you know, part-time, or halftime and it wouldn't be, it might not be, the numbers aren't as significant such as, you know, some of the other workforce higher ed issues that we were talking about. But with the homeless population its possibly give or take 500 kids if there was an opportunity where we could sort of kind a middle of the road where we could provide them part-time care in some of these situations.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Yeah, I think that would be up to this Committee. I'll get you the number but I wish the number was 500 kids. When you try to think about what Commissioner Cardona and our public schools are up against when you hear the number of families with children in school who are housing insecure, I know as commissioner it's been a big shock to me. I don't want to give you the wrong

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number, I'll get it to you it's certainly in the thousands, I want to say approaching 10,000 but I'm gonna, I don't want to give you an actual, the actual number because I don't have it in my head but it's a huge need even as we think about a fiscal note for families who are homeless. I think it would be a significant fiscal note, it wouldn't be \$38 million dollars but I think it would surprise you and Connecticut, since welfare reform, has chosen to use a very, very narrow group of circumstances under which Care 4 Kids can be used. And so it would take legislative and gubernatorial change to open it up to that kind of use. We could not, at this time, assign Care 4 Kids dollars to be used for families that are not working unless they are in very specific TANF and Teen Mom categories. So, anyway that answers your question.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Yeah, thank you for clarifying that. And just one more question with of course the licensure issues, I've seen a lot. We have a ton of programs in my community that are providing either aftercare or camps, things like that and I've noticed that our partnerships have gotten more and more complex in the community where a lot of people are partnering together to provide these programs because of how things are being licensed and I'm wondering if you could talk to whether this will make it easier, harder, the same. Do you know what I'm referring to or should I be more specific?

COMMISSIONER BYE: I don't really know what you're referring to if you don't mind being more specific?

REP. COMEY (102ND): So, if in a church that offers an arts, you know, six week or four week arts program with a musical or something like that, they

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will decide to partner with the town rec department because they have the oversight of the camp licensing, municipal license.

COMMISSIONER BYE: It's gotten more complicated but I know what you're talking about and this gets to Representative Kokoruda's point is so since municipalities are exempt many afterschool programs go to their municipality and say, not many, I don't know how many, but some and say will you say I'm a municipal program so I can escape oversight basically so I can escape regulation. And so there are these complicated relationships popping up in communities.

REP. COMEY (102ND): An I would just say it's the same staff that are just bouncing around from I feel like from program to program, you know, the folks leading the musicals and things like that are all the same staff and they're just trying to line up their I guess licensing requirements and things like that with background checks and things like that.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Yes, and you'd have to know the irony of me sitting here as a former afterschool programs director who used to lament about all the licensing regulations though they are because of this Act in 2011 significantly improved. I watch my licensors go out into the field and I'm been on visits with them and I believe what they do is so critical to protect the infrastructure of child safety in this State. We are so, I am so proud to be in a State where every program has an unannounced visit every year. They don't know when we're coming, we come. And I think that gives parents a lot of comfort and being on this side has really shown me that and I think we're working really hard

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to be responsive, that's why at your urging I'm more than willing to sit down with programs and look for some ways that we can help them be regulated but also operate. We don't want them not to operate but I think it would be important that this body says we think regulation and oversight is important we just think it should be, you know, regulation oversight that matches the age.

And again we are having licensing hearings to adapt to some of these concerns and we've going through a process and removed 17 rules and regulations from afterschool programs in response to legislative concern. So we've been here before. I think we can get through this but what we're saying in this Bill is we don't think that five special programs, six special programs shouldn't fall under regulation. We think there should be regulation and we think that parents want that unannounced visit. If I'm a parent, I want an unannounced visit every year, I want to know that the people working with my children have had fingerprint checks. There have been so many horrendous stories. I pick up the newspaper and think what is wrong with people, how could this happen and I represented West Hartford when Dr. Reardon's crimes came out and worked really had to get rid of the statute of limitations for people who abuse children and I've met some of these survivors 55 years old, it's wrecked their lives in many ways. They have not been able to have relationships. And so what we're talking about is really serious here and so I think we have to get to the point that middle ground we say, these programs need to be regulated and we need to do things like we did in 2011 and make sure they are regulated in a

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way that matches the age of the children who are in that care.

REP. COMEY (102ND): And I'm sorry. Thank you so much. Just one question. The, and I don't even know which Bill this falls under cause they're all sort of overlap, right, with the complicated. But the, I would just like to urge us to try to align the training requirements. I heard of a program that is only, staff is only working 10 hours a week, they are required to do 18 hours of professional development a year and just the challenges of getting them to do that and to maintain them because they have to do it within a, actually it's not a year, it's a short couple of month period or something like that they have to get that done and sort of the challenges of that because they are also working multiple jobs and things like that, so if we could somehow make that easier.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Yes and if can get that specific example or where that is happening so we can look at it within the context of statutes as we are reviewing our regulations, that would be helpful.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Do we have any other questions for? No. Okay, thank you, Commissioner. It's always a pleasure.

COMMISSIONER BYE: Thank you so much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Next we have Committee Miguel Cardona. Welcome, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Good Morning, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and members of the Education Committee. I am Miguel Cardona, the Commissioner of Education, and I am pleased to have an opportunity

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to testify before you today. You have my extensive written testimony so I will use this time to address two Bills on your Agenda. I'd like to also share that I am joined by my Chief of Staff, Laura Stefan, you know Laura and Kathy Dempsey our Chief Financial Officer. Deputy Commissioner Desi Nesmith should be joining us but as you might imagine the press conference on the Coronavirus.

SB 173, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT. The Department fully supports this proposal and thanks the Committee for raising it. We believe that in order for districts to achieve the highest level of success, they must have good overall health in a variety of different spheres. From the effectiveness of a district's teachers and leaders, to the availability of quality curriculum in all grades, to a local board's fiscal health, and a local board's health or effectiveness, to the state of school climate. These among others outlined in the bill, are the most important things we can measure to determine whether a district is delivering on its promise to provide a high quality and equitable education for all students. I am very pleased to report that that Department was successful in filling a position that will carry out this work. While we do not need legislation to begin the creation of a framework, we believe it is important to codify it in statute, so the work will continue far after we are gone from our current roles.

SB 172, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. The Bill is comprised of the State Board of Education's legislative

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proposals, and we again thank the Committee for raising it.

Section 1 extends the length of time between renewing a professional educator certificate from 5 to 10 years. This will result in no lost revenue to the State, because there is no cost associated with that renewal. It will also free up a significant amount of staff time that can be shifted to ensure the timely processing of roughly 20,000 certificates, permits, and other authorizations on a yearly basis.

Section 2 would allow an initial certificate holder, who has never served under that certificate, to renew it for a fifth time without having to go through new requirements that often involves going back to school or taking additional tests. We have found that the statute as currently written is having a disparate impact on female certificate holders who chose to stay home with their children until the children reached school-age and were then trying to get back into the workforce. And as we celebrate Women and Girls Day in the Capital today, I'm happy to bring this forward.

Section 3 removes an outdated statutory reference to an Academic Advancement Program within the high school graduation requirement statute. In 2013, legislation was passed that allows Local Education Agencies or LEAs to determine eligible credits for graduation based on the Demonstration of State of Connecticut Mastery. The Demonstration of Mastery took the place of the Academic Advancement Program, under which the Department made such determinations, rather than the Local Education Agency.

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Section 4 removes obsolete statutory language regarding continuing education classes. In 2013 legislation was passed that removed a requirement for districts to report data to the Department regarding all professional learning offered, for the purpose of tracking CEU or continuing education units. While the district's burden was taken away, the Department's burden to produce an annual report compiling all of the data still exists. As a result, we are just asking that be removed.

Section 5 resolves a conflict within statute regarding the appointment of the superintendent of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), once an Executive Director is hired.

Section 6 clarifies the policy making authority of the CTECS's Board, upon their separation from the Department of Education.

Section 7 pertains to background checks for Charter School Governing Councils and Charter Management Organizations. Statute currently requires individuals serving on either charter entity to complete a background check in accordance with strict FBI protocol. However the FBI will not release the background information to the Council members or members of the CMO. Unlike a traditional district, these charter organizations have no clear hierarchy for delivery of the information. The proposed language will still require that the background checks take place. They will not be limited to the stringent rules employed by the FBI. I would like to note that this will have no effect on teacher background checks for charter schools.

Section 8 removes three obsolete Department reporting requirements, as the information that was

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contained in those reports, is either obsolete or easily accessible in other ways.

I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify and I look forward to working with you in this session and I'll be happy to take any questions.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you, Mr. Commissioner. I just specifically, can you go back Section 3, of 172, specifically what is that doing, referencing something that we did 2013 and we want to change it now?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: So the legislation let's districts determine eligible credits for the Demonstration of Mastery based projects. So it give the district the opportunity to identify what quantifies for Mastery Project versus the State Department of Education having a very singular focus on the Academic Advancement Program.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Okay, so this, the local LEAs can make the determination that there's something that they had Mastered? Oh, okay. Also I want to be very clear and specific about some of the things that you referenced in 173, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK. Now you and I are educators. We can talk educational language all day long. Specifically what are we trying to do here cause it sounds like some great things like working with boards of education and making sure our kids are provided quality education. Can you be a little more specific and speak to, in layman's terms, some of the things we're trying to do as with the support of us to move Connecticut forward.

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COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you for the opportunity, Senator McCrory. This is something that I feel as a Commissioner of Education could probably have the greatest impact as commissioner for me. And that's why I bring it forward as something that I'd codified. You asked me to speak in layman's terms, so I want to make it comparable to a human body.

We have many systems in our human body. We have our skeletal system, our nervous system, we have the cardiovascular systems, our respiratory system. They are all very important. They are pretty interdependent from one another. You could have a very strong muscular system but if your nervous system goes down, you're gonna be in a hospital bed. If you have a good nervous system, good respiratory system, good cardiovascular system, but you have your skeletal system breaks down you're gonna be in a hospital bed. So I make that analogous to our districts. We have curriculum systems. We have teaching and learning systems. We have culture and climate systems. We have leadership systems. We have fiscal health systems. We have board governance systems.

Senator McCrory, what I'm saying is we need to do a better job as an agency ensuring health in all of those systems. Historically we've been very focused on talent for example, teacher evaluation or the Department of Education has been a good emergency room if there are major issues. If we're gonna move the needle in Connecticut it's our responsibility to be more proactive to make sure there is health in each of those systems and we are prepared to do that and we are asking for support from the Education Committee.

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SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): You know, that was an excellent analogy and I am so happy that you are willing to take the lead in Connecticut to actually go in and have the ability to go into school districts and help where help is needed cause traditionally that position has not been the case. It hasn't been the case. In my opinion it's been a paper tiger unfortunately and if you're willing to actually go in and help school districts which means you're gonna help children, which means you're gonna help communities and neighborhoods then I am willing to support you on that matter and I'm really grateful that this is gonna be one of your major tasks as Commissioner of Education. And I don't have any more questions. Just the fact that you're willing to do this makes me very proud. Any questions?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Yes.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Of course I have questions [Laughter]. Hi, Commissioner. Last night I had an opportunity to go to CCSU. There was a really interesting meeting on edTPA, I'm sure you know that one of our Bills is to, the Bill to eliminate that mandated assessment. What I was really concerned about was the number of students and I'm still getting emails from many, many students across the State and I have yet to hear anything positive from one of the students in regards to edTPA. And I know in the Bill it states that it would be up to you if we eliminate that process that it would be up to you to, you know, give them guidance, give these schools guidance on what they would have to do in order to certify teachers. I heard some really interesting

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testimony from Professor Drew Gidamore (phonetic) and he was from the Graduate School of Education from Rutgers University. We had professors from UConn, professors from Southern, professors from Central, may professors that are also not really happy with this tool that they are presently using. So I have some concerns and particularly when I am hearing from many, from the students that I've heard from are students of color and they feel that it is a huge issue and deterrent to them and actually there have been some students that have withdrawn from the process because they felt it was not a fair process. So I'd like to get your view on edTPA. We have yet as a body decided if we're going to eliminate it or if we are going work with the current system but, I just want to get your view on edTPA.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you for that. I believe that came out of recommendation from a task force developed EPAC with input from various stakeholders so it wasn't a one person making a decision on what it's gonna look like. I was actually on a sister agency PEAC, Professional Evaluation Advisory Committee to look at teacher evaluation then. EPAC was serving to ensure that they were addressing an issue that a, I was a building principal and assistant superintendent at the time. There was the feeling that graduates of our teacher preparation programs we ill-equipped to meet the needs of our diverse learners in our schools and ill-equipped to meet the ever growing demand that our students have particularly in the urban centers. In fact there was one superintendent that made a claim that he would not hire candidates

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from a particular college because the feeling was that the graduates were not prepared.

So EPAC worked to develop standards that all colleges can work on that are, in my opinion, more authentic than a test that someone had to go to on a given day. So keep in mind the history of why this started. As a public school educator I value the importance of honoring the challenge and rigor of becoming a teacher much like I wouldn't send by two children to a cardiologist that hasn't proven that she or he can do the work. I wouldn't want any student in the State of Connecticut to be in a classroom where a teacher that hasn't demonstrated Mastery of their craft. To the notion that is disproportionately affecting black and brown children, I would say let's go back to where it started. We had teachers going into our classrooms that were not prepared in their urban centers the most. Change is hard and I would argue that the iteration of it took many thinkers around the table to negotiate and it can always evolve into a better product.

It's more authentic, it's more connected to what real teaching is than a test and we are all about, at the Agency, reducing barriers to get into teaching. But that is not the same, you know, I don't want to confuse lowering standards. We need the best in our classrooms and we want to make sure that these universities and preparation programs are preparing teachers which means that if they're struggling with the edTPA. There are supports in place to make sure that they can be successful. I strongly support edTPA, obvious? I will share too that this notion that the State Department of Education will work with the Universities, there are

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what 17-18 accrediting universities. The capacity that we have at the Agency to do that work, I'll be very frank with you the quality of intervention when we see that there is an issue, we don't have the capacity to do this. So I worry that we would be going backwards with regard to how we are preparing teachers to work with our students who have greater need now than ever before.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay, thank you. But you eluded to there was just one specific university that was running into these problems. So if the other universities were doing a good job why punish the others? See, the way I'm looking at this is that I think we go to panic mode when there is one institution that does not a great job and then there could be 10 or 20 other institutions that are doing a fabulous jobs in certifying teachers and then we make these decisions to then go to one uniform measure and it may be something that the other universities like, why are we doing this? I mean we were doing a good job in the first place. So why not focus on that one entity that was not doing the correct job.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: An intervention for that.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Right.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: So thank you. I wasn't a part of EPAC when it, but I know that it had representatives from different schools so it just wasn't just one university. And while I share with you that there was one university that was being identified by one superintendent I know that there was a shared feeling that there has to be a better, higher level of preparation that is more authentic with what is happening in the field throughout the

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State of Connecticut. So that narrative of that one university I think is an example but it doesn't necessarily mean that others didn't feel similarly with regard to teacher preparation programs in general. So I don't want that. And I agree with you, sometimes you know, decisions are based made off an N of 1 so there is one example of this and now we are gonna do, so I would argue that it is just merely an example but not necessarily the only impetus for edTPA to be developed. I believe there's 17 or 22 other states doing this work. So, you know, it's not new. I will share that the agency, our Agency is committed to supporting our college partners to make sure that we're giving our students, are pre-service teachers, opportunities in our schools. We're committed to this process. It matters to us but I do look at edTPA as the culmination of a lot of work developing high standards to ensure that every one of our kids, no matter where they live in Connecticut have access to teachers that are high quality.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Do we have any questions?

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Representative Gilcrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks, Commissioner. Hi, how are you? I want to talk about a Bill in your testimony that you didn't speak about, House Bill 5217 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO SCHOOL START TIMES.

In your testimony you speak to the Department being stretched which I recognize now having been in this Committee two years, I fully recognize that and I sit on Appropriations as well. So with your first

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recommendation that we look at who would oversee that task force I am happy to have conversations with your Department to see it that could potentially be on the legislative side.

When I see your see your second recommendation though I get a little weary because the whole point to me of having the State look at the issue of school start times is to see if we can actually come to a statewide solution to this issue. I serve the Community of West Hartford who has been discussing this for now going on 20 years and when communities have been discussing this they have been running it up against similar barriers and so while I think this working group if we are able to pass it, would certainly look at the experiences of the five communities in the State who have changed their school start times, it is my hope that folks who come to the table have an open mind to having a conversation about what a statewide solution might look like so that we can have a better understanding of the costs associated with that and all the barriers that go into that. So I would just ask that there be an approach that we come to the table understanding that we need to see if it is possible to have a statewide solution.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you, Representative Gilcrest. Actually at our next Board meeting at the State Department of Education we're gonna have a district come present who is doing that, right. So we are definitely interested in the research behind it and I have a 15-year-old that I have to drag out of bed every morning, no he gets up on his own, I don't want to call him out here. He does, you know, but I understand that. I get it. I was an elementary school principal for ten years and I know

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that, you know, the switch there, you know, nine year old's are up really early, so I get that and sleep patterns and so discussing it, that definitely we want to be part of the conversation and listen to it. I think our greatest caution is to consider unintended consequences that have a greater negative impact that a changing of the start time can have in a positive way. So, you know, at the end of the day, it could come down to do I hire reading teachers and social worker or do I hire more school buses and bus drivers to drive students around because of the patterns. So this is one of those cases I do want to have more conversation about it, learn more about it, here from the cases and be open minded. I think you are absolutely right but I also know that in SILO it sounds good but there are unintended consequences that could disproportionately exacerbate some of the disparities that we are already seeing in our State of Connecticut and I just want to be mindful of that. But I agree that hearing more about it and being a part of that conversation is something we need to do.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, that would be great.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Representative McCarthy.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and welcome Commissioner. It is good to see you today. I have a comment and then one question but first I would just to thank you for the recommendations that you made. I think particularly looking at the certification requirements and moving from five to ten years was an excellent move and I just wanted to thank you for that. I've heard quite a bit about that piece. Could you tell me, I

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thought I read, I thought there was a cost associated with, is there not a cost associated with that?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: For that certificate, no. Yeah, there are costs with the others but for that one there is not.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): That's fine but basically your recommendations I think were very reasonable throughout and thank you for all of them. On the Tech School piece, could you just mention, I know with the separation that will be taking place in the future, the Tech Ed schools will still have a board in place and I'm wondering if you will be having, what type of interaction at your office would continue to have with the Tech Schools first and then I'll go back if I may.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Sure, Representative McCarty and to go back to the certification, I appreciate you sharing that and I want to whole Committee to know that we have work to do in certification and in talent to insure that we are providing pathways for teaching and communicating the pathways that the talent team has worked really hard to create. So that's a body of work we're looking for rolling up our sleeves and doing more there.

With regard to the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, so we're trying to put into policy the governing structure that's gonna be needed if they're gonna exist as an independent district like the other districts throughout. The language here has it similar to what a Regional Education Service Center might be set up. So what we're trying to do is just create that infrastructure so that if they become an independent

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district and are able to serve a little bit more independently from being a, I don't want to say a Department of the Agency, I think we're trying just to set that up and we're doing things within the agency to try to make sure they have their own fiscal systems set up as well. Again it's trying to create a system where they can be independent.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Well I certainly appreciate your effort and your work in having knowledge with the tech schools and so it will be a smooth transition and there will be an ongoing conversation I believe.

So, the other piece that you mentioned earlier and I know you're looking to set up a framework, a new framework. How do you envision that? I think most of the districts are doing a lot of that work now but are you looking for the districts to report back to SDE with and is the intent to look at where districts may be falling, where the disparities are perhaps. Could you just comment a little bit how you see that working going forward?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Sure, thank you for the question. I envision the framework being a tool that districts can have to self-assess with their own staff on areas, as I mentioned earlier, strength of curriculum, you know, is their curriculum culturally relevant. Do they, do they include the narrative of our brothers and sisters here or is it absent? Do they have a system for addressing disparities in exclusionary practices that push students out from one group more than others? Is their board functioning based on what we know works for successful local boards of education or is there a disruption there that is affecting student

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outcomes. So ultimately there should be a tool for districts to self-assess for 169 districts. Right now we have Alliance Districts that we have more hands on. But if your district number 35 or number 36 in terms of in need of support, we're not really there. I would like there to be a more gradual level of support for districts based on not only the Alliance but also districts say, you know, we're struggling with leadership development. How can we get support through that framework we're gonna provide access to technical support throughout the State of Connecticut.

What I find, Representative McCarty is we have fragmented pockets of excellence. We have some districts that are doing things really well but they are not talking to that district. So this framework is really bringing things together under a cohesive frame of system health. And while it's gonna be a tool for self-reflection it will also be a tool for the State Department of Education to assess district's strengths in areas outside of, just like I said earlier, the academics, right. So it's gonna be a tool for us to peer in a little bit to see that state of education, the State of Connecticut education, right. So if we see that a district is continually going in the wrong direction with regard to student outcomes, we might use that framework to work with the district to provide support and accountability. But we know that we can provide accountability and funding so without naming districts we can send \$25 million dollars in funding to a district, but if their board is not functional then we'd be negligent if we are not calling that out and we need to not just call that out but

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provide support and the framework is going to be intended to provide support and assistance there.

We know that teaching matters. But if you're teaching and the curriculum that you have is two years behind or you have teachers routinely Googling lesson plans because they don't have good quality materials in front of them, it doesn't matter, it does matter, but the effectiveness of that teacher matters less than if you have an effective teacher with quality curriculum in front of them. So to me, we need to do more to ensure that we have our pulse on those area that we know, research says it, you know, this is what schools need to be successful. This is what districts need. And you can have really good curriculum but if your culture climate is bad they are not gonna want to be there. So when we talk about chronic absenteeism or, you know, we have to make sure we're also looking at the culture and the climate. So we're gonna create indicators, create tools for districts and bring resources together around that with you support.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you very much for that explanation, very helpful. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you. It's been over an hour and what we do is after the hour we go back and forth between our public officials and the public. However my colleague has just two more questions and then we'll rotate between the public and our public officials and the public officials, you only have two minutes also, okay. So, Bobby.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Commissioner before us we have two bills, right. One is on AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE SOCIAL

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STUDIES CURRICULUM which is SB 314 and then we have another one that has come to us again this year and that's HB 5215 An Act Concerning The Inclusion Of Climate Change Instruction In The Public School Curriculum.

So to climate change I just wanted to get your feedback, what is included in the Next Generation Science Standards in regards to climate change and are you aware if this is being taught in all our schools or just some?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: So once this framework is done, I can answer that better. But it is part of the NGSS framework and it is part of the curriculum that should be being taught. This is not something that I believe should be optional, this is part of the science curriculum and not teaching it would be negligent of doing your work just like algebra 1 teacher not teaching algebra. So it's really important that the Committee understands that this is baked into the curriculum now and we support, the Agency supports the implementation of climate change instruction through the CNSS standards. Specifically I can get more information on what it looks like, I would have my Science Education Consultant pullout where it's found, what part of the curriculum in elementary, middle and high and present that to the Committee.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay, thank you. And the last question I have in regards to the inclusion of Native America Indian Studies, do you know of any other states that teach on Native America Studies in their curriculum?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: I haven't done a landscape analysis of the country of where it's done but to

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that point, Representative Sanchez I think the absence of the consistent presence of their role in our, in the United States, is neglectful and shameful. We need to do better. And I would urge the Committee to consider that that is the primary role of the State Department of Education to make sure that, as I mentioned earlier, that the curriculum that we have in front of our students is culturally relevant and responsive and that it provides what someone referred to as windows and mirrors, windows into other cultures and a mirror so that students can see themselves. I think that history of our Native Americas have been neglected in our curriculum and it's our responsibility to make sure that it is in there more inclusively.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Commissioner. Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you to both my Chairmen [Laughter]. Commissioner, thank you so much. You know, when you were talking about Senate Bill 173 I have to tell you it's so great to hear your comments. That was the one you were obviously talking about priorities and I give you a lot of credit. One of the things I haven't heard, I don't think we've heard up here in a long time, as you said we are ready to it. I can't tell you how great this is to hear. Cause usually we hear why we can't, you know, quite often its funding, and lack of staff and so I give you a lot of credit.

I have a question to ask you which isn't actually a Bill here but it's sort of an overall. There is so many reports, data collections that are sent to the Department and I remember a commissioner, two commissioners ago, Connecticut Prior saying, we have

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no idea what half these reports do and we don't need them. But nothing, I don't think anything ever got changed. One of the reports that came up at another meeting, the Children's Meeting was really getting rid of the report, the data report on bullying at our schools. And the reasons given was first of all the Department is not doing anything with it and a lot of districts aren't doing it. They are saying zero, you got a report on incidences they had zero incidences which obviously we know is not correct. So could you just, my issue was that just because it isn't working, doesn't mean it's not important. But can you address how you see that in your department with the reports that, two things, the reports that districts have taken the time to send you and also the specific one.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Thank you. So I recall during that tenure of the commissioner there was an effort to reduce the amount of reporting statewide. I think it was Red Tape Committee or something and it's true, as a former Assistant Superintendent and I was responsible for submitting a lot of reports and making sure the deadline are adhered, from that experience as an assistant superintended, I don't recall there being reports that I sent that went nowhere but there is always room for those conversations to happen so that we can preserve peoples valuable time in the districts.

With regards to the bullying if I could comment on that. You know, again from the practitioners perspective for the last 20 years the reporting feature that came out was very haphazardly done which means that if one district is counting this, another district, the data didn't really accurately reflect what's happening in the district so you

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could have a district whose exclusionary practices or behavioral discipline data is really high with no levels of bullying. So to me, I'm gonna look at the exclusionary practice, I'm gonna look at the climate of the district and through the framework have a better sense of where it's working well and where it's not working well and that will be a better indicator of where more work needs to be done around culture and climate which includes creating an environment that's bully free.

So to answer your question, I don't know that there are specific reports that lately have been brought up to be, other than the bullying one, but we would definitely be willing to engage in conversations with our partners in the field to insurance that, number one we communicate what the value of the report is or remove it because it's not valuable.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Okay, I know this is our first Public Hearing colleagues, I'm gonna be a little generous and allow Representative Linehan to have her question and then we moving on.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I promise, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the indulgence. Hello, Commissioner how are you?

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: I'm well, thank you.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I appreciate that Representative Kokoruda did ask that question and I had wished you had been in the Children's Public Hearing to speak directly to the issue of the bullying reporting. I want to quickly get this on record that within that Committee some of the issues were the fact that, that specific report is coming in with what we believe to be information that isn't

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actually factual and that once that report comes in there is no mechanism for SDE to actually do anything with that and then maybe that that information and give Best Practices to school boards that just haven't been happening. And so I want you publicly say that I'd like to invite you to have that conversation with me on our JF Deadline, is Thursday so we would need to take about this rather quickly. But it's important to note that when we spoke to the former commissioner the thought was if we were going to take that reporting and require someone to do something with it, that it would require another person to be hired and within SDE to specifically do that and the State just didn't have the money for that. So if that is something you could look at and come back to us, but of course this is going to be something that will eventually come to the Education Committee as well so I think it is pertinent to everyone here in this room. So if we can have that conversation.

COMMISSIONER CARDONA: Happy to do that.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): I would appreciate that and I am free all day Monday. Thank you, Committee. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you, Commissioner. Appreciate it. Up next we have Subira Gordon, followed by Representative Palm.

SUBIRA GORDON: Good Morning, Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez, and the other members of the Education Committee, my name is Subira Gordon and I am Executive Director of ConnCAN. You have my written testimony and I am here to testify, I'll just list all the Bills even though I'm not going to speak about all of them because I only have three

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minutes and Senator McCrory is being very strict today.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): I said two minutes.

SUBIRA GORDON: Two minutes, okay [Laughter].
Testimony on House Bill 5221, Senate Bill 173, Senate Bill 314, House Bill 5220, House Bill 5222, House Bill 5380. So, ConnCAN is deeply committed to equity throughout our education systems and these bills will improve equity, expand access, and support academic achievement. So together, we will have a lasting impact on students, families and communities throughout Connecticut.

So I read the list but I won't go through all of them, the bills in buckets. We strongly support Senate Bill 173, the Commissioner kind of gave all the reasons why it's an important Bill so I don't think I need to say that again. Last year we strongly submitted including African-American and Latino studies into the curriculum so of course we gonna support the inclusion of Native America Studies into the Social Studies curriculum because we believe that this history is equally as important as, for all the reasons we supported the Bills last year.

We are also strongly supporting the expansion of the Care 4 Kids Program by including those people who are enrolled in secondary education programs. I think it is really important to get that, those individuals who might see going to school to become and educator as a barrier because they already have a child. And homeless families I would say are kind of a no-brainer.

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But I do want to spend a little bit of time talking about House Bill 5380 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL LITERACY. So just one in five students in New Britain are at or above grade level in ELA. One in four students in Hartford, under three in ten students in Bridgeport and under three in ten students in Waterbury. That just goes to show us that this is an important Bill and literacy is incredibly. We definitely support literacy as a priority.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Subira. That was good. So one in five in New Briton, huh? Do we have any questions from Committee members? No. Thank you so much for your advocacy. Next we have Representative Palm.

REP. PALM (36TH): Good Morning distinguished Chairs and esteemed colleagues and Members of the Education Committee. For the record my name is Christine Palm, I am the State Representative for the Connecticut River Towns of Chester, Deep River, Essex and Haddam and it is such a pleasure to be testifying on HB 5215 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM which is as you will recall a version of passed last year through the House on a bipartisan basis and it was not called in the Senate. I am hoping this is the year that we can get it through both chambers.

I was very pleased to hear Commissioner Cardona's testimony because I wanted to start out by dispelling a myth that this Bill was intended in any way to undermine or obviate the NGSS, in fact it is to do just the opposite. It's simply to close a loophole in our State's statute that currently says

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you must teach science in accordance with NGSS which may include climate change. That is line 19. The Bill language changed "may" to "including" and that is a very small technical change but it makes all the difference in the world to this Bill.

So again what it doesn't do is anyway strip away the power of the NGSS or do an end run around it. Again, it strengthens it. The Bill does do or seeks to do four things, first of all to empower teachers. According to an NPR poll, 86 percent of teachers believe in teaching climate change and that is why this Bill has the support of the American Federation of Teachers, the Connecticut Education Association and the Connecticut Association of Boards of Ed. And rather than burden teachers with a new mandate this in fact gives them the authority to keep climate change as part of their curriculum. And I am so glad to be joined by my colleague Representative Reyes who is going to talk about a couple of other things this Bill will do.

In fact number two, Jerry if you're ready it enhances environmental justice [Bell chimes]. Do you want to talk about that, to talk about the environmental justice piece of this?

REP. REYES (75th): Thank you, Representative Palm, to the Chairs, thank you very much. Geraldo Reyes, 75th District Waterbury. And I just wanted to, coming here to accompany Representative Palm, I clearly stand behind this Bill.

You have my written testimony, I'm not gonna read it. I just want to put it in your minds and thought that the Environmental Justice piece of this is that all children need to learn and expand and understand how the environment effects each and every one of

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us. And even those students that are, you know, not everybody is being taught the same environmental needs or curriculum so I think it is important that we expand it to include everybody, like I said, I'm not gonna go over every single thing that I wrote in my testimony but I strongly support the Bill 5215 and stand here ready for any questions.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you.

REP. PALM (36TH): So in addition to the environmental justice piece and increasing educational equity I have, you will hear later from some students from the Connecticut River Academy. We have in Connecticut some wonderful magnet schools, some private schools where climate change education is very central. I am going to leave with a clerk there personal letters to you. These are from fifth graders in the Town of Waterford who are not being taught about climate change in their school. They in fact take an afterschool program with a wonderful group called Reforest the Tropics based in Mystic and because of the lack of climate change education at their schools their parents are sending them to this afterschool program.

Finally I wanted to say that in addition to helping position all kids for jobs in the green new economy, if and when we get such a thing going, this Bill seeks to codify into State statute best practices. For the sake of argument, cause I keep hearing we are all already doing this, all of our schools are already teaching this, if that were true, which I don't believe is true, but if it were, then what harm in putting it into State statute, nothing would change. Nobody would be burdened with anything if they are not already claiming to do. More

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importantly my making it a requirement and closing that dangerous loophole in the NGSS compliance we're assuring that no one in the future can every strip out the teaching of climate change. It's a preemptive strike to make sure that this remains part of the curriculum and I know the curriculum reform is hard. I know that it is hard to be a superintendent supervising districts but I am quite sure that it is much harder to be a child or a young person overwhelmed by the prospects of a problem they had no hand in creating and for which they are ill-equipped to be part of the solution. So I thank you very much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And welcome Representative to our Committee today. So I just think I heard you made a comment so if I'm understanding throughout the State of Connecticut 98 percent of our schools are teaching about climate change and so they are meeting those standards currently. Did you say that Waterford was not, because I was a board of education member in Waterford for 20 years and I know that our district is throughout the curriculum has climate change there?

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you for that question. I believe that 98 percent figure came from a survey done by CAPS and what it actually said was 98 percent of respondents are already teaching it, that mean two percent aren't and it also doesn't tell us how many people didn't respond. So I question the result respectfully of that survey. Later on today you will hear from a climate activist who did a

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survey of students who said as many as 28 percent in the State are actually not being taught this.

One of things about the NGSS that I wanted to put out, you're quite right, Representative. Throughout the NGSS there is this age appropriate stepped pedagogy and it's wonderful. The testing happens intermittently, I think it's grades five, seven, eight and possibly eleven. My question is what is happening in those other years. What is happening to kids who come in and halfway through their school career and they missed the first three years. I have, I won't read this to you because it's all in the testimony but there are many, many students who have written in saying that did not get it and so this is not in any way to disparage any particular school district but rather to make sure that every child in every school, in every one of our 169 towns get this teaching.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you for that clarification but I know we take very seriously all that we do in my particular district in Waterford and now you have been in contact with our superintendent and assured that it is in the curriculum. So thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Linehan.

REP. LINEHAN (103RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Representative thank you so much for being here. I think it is very appropriate to come here today and talk about this again, and again, and again until we actually see the legislation pass both Chambers. I'm going to offer you some information that was, I was asked to pass on to you from a group of sixth graders in Cheshire Schools as well as my, I have three children, one is a sixth

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grader in Cheshire, I have two others that are first grader and a third grader. They support this Bill tremendously.

I speak to kids often and in our schools we actually had a group of kids come together and discuss it on their own and that is actually even when Cheshire does use, does allow climate change to be taught in their schools. And a group of children in my daughter's class actually came together and wrote their piece of climate change. They had a writing piece they needed to put forward and they were able to choose whatever issue they wanted to focus on. The majority of the class chose climate change. This is something that our children are very concerned about. So, you know, I have, that you have my support. I just wanted you to know that this is something that, this Bill, the need for this curriculum and the curriculum in general is being discussed by our kids and if they are the ones that are trying to lead on this, then it's very obvious that there is an issue and the adults need to help them do that. So I support this greatly as do the children in Cheshire Public Schools. So thank you both, very, very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Gilchrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for being here Representative Palm and bringing this issue forward and Representative Rojas. It is wonderful to hear how many children are reaching out and the support you are hearing. Have you heard from teachers about this?

REP. PALM (36TH): Yes, there are some here today who will be testifying. I heard from a teacher actually in your town, Representative Gilchrest who

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said, "I coach teachers in the STEM areas and was a high school administrator. I have also chaired 12 high school accreditation visits. These experiences have given the evidence that climate change and its impact in our lives is not being taught in all of our schools." So one of the problems I think with lawmaking is that we can't rely on anecdotal evidence and we can all find, you know, statistics or stories that we believe support our case. I will tell you I've heard from teachers and students throughout the State and parents and you will see it in the testimony that is in the archive saying that they missed out on it or they got there a year after it was taught and they had to wait three years until it was taught again and I think as we've learned from the fires in Australia this is a constant evolving. I know that all disciplines evolve but three times there is never not gonna equal nine. I don't think. Climate change changes constantly by the hour so I believe students should have it every single year and I don't believe that is happening currently.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Thank you, Representative Palm and Representative Rojas. I think we are done with questions and thank you for your testimony.

REP. PALM (36TH): Thank you so much for your time and attention.

REP. ROJAS (9TH): Thank you.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Next I'm moving to Barbara Distinti and after Barbara Distinti Sarah Eagan. Welcome.

BARBARA DISTINTI: Hello, thanks very much. Senator McCrory, Senator Bethel, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee, I appear today on behalf of Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut, it's a statewide organization of parents, providers, attorneys and advocates who work on behalf of students with disabilities. This Committee has been open to meeting with us and considering our views. For that, we are extremely thankful. Providing special education to Connecticut's most vulnerable students' needs to be one of the State's most important priorities. Our investment in these children is designed to enable them to become useful effective participants in our society and to provide them with the skills and knowledge they will need to work and live in our communities.

This is in reference to HB 5221 AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT and it's about the study of public education in Connecticut.

For the short 2020 session we have five items on our legislative agenda and five common sense items we would like to talk about and only one costs us money so.

The first one is, when children make the transition from Birth to Three to special education, current written policy precludes the Early Childhood professionals who provide services from communicating recommendations to the Planning and Placement Team that design an Individual Education Program for that child. That means the only members

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of the PPT who have significant knowledge of the child's needs and progress are prevented from sharing their expertise with the team. We would like to change that. We would like to allow Birth to Three providers to communicate their recommendations to the Planning and Placement Team and have the same protection against retaliation as was provided to school staff in P.A. 19-184.

Second, currently, many school districts significantly restrict or prohibit parents from providing important information to their children's PPT by preventing or inappropriately limiting evaluators retained by parents from observing the child at school and observing proposed programs for the child. This limit restricts the information to be used by the Team and prevents the parents from fully participating in the process. We would like to pass legislation paralleling the Massachusetts observation law.

Three, we strongly endorse legislation to make the Connecticut Technical High School System more receptive to students with special needs. Many students with disabilities thrive on hands-on problem solving, mechanical and technical work and Connecticut needs the skills of these individuals.

Four, Connecticut General Statutes 10-15c currently prohibits discrimination in education, but disability is not listed as a protected class. We would like disability.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): I'm sorry, could you start summarizing.

BARBARA DISTINTI: Sure. Finally last session, the Legislature passed a bill to lower the age for the

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beginning of transition services to students diagnosed with autism to 14. We would like to lower the age for the beginning of transition services for all students with IEPs, not just the ones with autism. Thank you very much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, any questions?
Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): I'll be very quick. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for coming in for your testimony. Many of the areas that you highlighted we are looking at. Thank you very much for your comments on the Birth to Three Program. I know OEC has been working on that diligently and they will be submitting a report to us related, and I'm sure there will be components there. Also on the Tech Ed School as you may have seen, on Monday there will be more there. We agree and we need to do something in that area. So I'd like to thank SEEK and all of the fine work that you have been doing but I think we are very aware of many of the issues that you've brought forward today. Thank you.

BARBARA DISTINTI: That's great to hear. Thank you so much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you so much. I agree with everything you said and just to make all these different steps and milestones better. The first one, I think it was the first one you mentioned was the Birth to Three. We were able a couple of years ago to, I think it was through legislation, that the Birth to Three trainers can actually now mention to parents who they work with the hearing test,

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something simple like that has made a difference. And so having Birth to Three person or representative after those PPT meetings. What has been preventing it? What has stopped that.

BARBARA DISTINTI: My understanding is it is written policy. And I would have to ask by lawyer friend, I'm the parent, I'm not the lawyer so.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Well thank you, I this and I'm happy to hear that our leaders of the Committee are really looking into this cause all these things make so much sense. Thank you.

BARBARA DISTINTI: Thank you so much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Sarah Eagan.

SARAH EAGAN: Good Afternoon, my name is Sarah Eagan and I run the State's Office of the Child Advocate here to testify on two Bills, the first is House Bill 5216 AN ACT ELIMINATING THE LICENSURE EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING CHILD CARE SERVICES. The OCA does strongly support the consideration of this Bill by this Committee. It is not the first time that the Bill has come up before. It came up before the Committee in 2016 and I believe did not make it out of Committee at that time so we would strongly urge consideration. The Bill was proposed on the grounds that oversight for before and after school programs that are statutorily exempt from licensure was unnecessary and costly and that complying with the licensing requirement could cause some programs to be unable to affordably server underprivileged children whose families depend on the program for afterschool care and support.

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The OEC contended in 2016 when the Bill was first raised that more oversight was needed due to, "numerous complaints from parents about lack of supervision in unlicensed afterschool programs."

I do want to state that the default public policy of the State of Connecticut is to license child serving programs whether they are daycare, camps, afterschool programs, the Y is licensed, private camps are licensed. And parents as the OEC Commissioner talked about, parents rely on licensures not as we know, I'm sure the Committee appreciates, is not a ministerial governmental function. Right? The Office of Child Advocate is in the oversight business. Oversight is there because it is part of public policies of the State to ensure framework of licensure for the places where parents send their children to have other people take care of their children.

I also want to state at the outset that DOC deeply appreciates the mission or the programs that are currently statutorily exempt. You know, it is very important that communities have places where children can go to spend recreational time and be safe and get the other things that they need. We would never want to see [Bell rings] anything interfere with that mission. However licensure serves an important health and safety purpose. As you also heard about today in 2019 *Hurst Media* published a series of investigative reports about what happens when background checking and oversight have not been adequate in certain afterschool programs included the boys and girls clubs programs around the country. You know, the business of Office of the Child Advocate is looking at the adequacy of the safety net for highly vulnerable

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children. We can say both things but the mission of the programs is wonderful and that licensure exists to support insurance of the health and safety of vulnerable children. What I want to communicate is that and I think we heard this from the Commissioner and I think from some of your questions earlier is that these are not, I don't think it is binary choice between licensure or we do license or do kids go to programs that are unregulated. I think we have to have this conversation.

And the last thing I would say about it is that licensure laws exist just to support the State's public policy, that it is necessary to ensure child safety and transparency for consumers. One of the things I didn't mention in my written testimony is that all licensed child service programs in the State of Connecticut, a parent can go into the State's E-license data base and look up their license history, regulatory findings, corrective actions, etc. and for nay program that accepts Care 4 Kids. Unlicensed programs that information is not publicly available on the State's licensing database. So as a parent and consumer you can't find that information in the same way. So I would submit to the Committee that if certain programs are gonna be exempt from licensure or remain exempt from licensure it is appropriate and important to ask one how does that exemption serve the State's public policy that is in favor of licensure.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Ms. Eagan, can you summarize please?

SARAH EAGAN: Yes. Two what criteria for license exemption is or should be and three, how exempt programs otherwise meet or should be able to

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demonstrate that they have an effective and transparent framework in lieu of licensure, inspection and transparency ensuring child safety and information sharing with parents. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Any questions? Representative Gilchrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Through you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for being here. Just a quick question that last part, is it the position of your Department though that these programs should be licensed?

SARAH EAGAN: Yes, I think I stumbled on that for a minute, sorry I was trying to rush. Yes, Thank you, Representative Gilchrest. It is our position that these programs should be licensed, that is the default public policy of the State of Connecticut. It serves a critical function.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Ms. Eagan. Next we were gonna have Representative Rutigliano. We apologize that we didn't get you on the list earlier [Laughs] and after Representative Rutigliano we will have Senator Osten.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Thank you, Chairman Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Ranking Members McCarthy and Berthel and distinguished Members of the Education Committee. I sit up here today with Marty Isaac who is on the Board of Finance in Trumbull to advocate for the Bill to start the taskforce for later school start times.

I won't go into too much detail or read my testimony because I've submitted it. I think the science is

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clear, that the students will do better if school starts later especially the teenage years, the high school years. What I envision for this task force is sort of a clearing house of Best Practices, somewhere where our 169 towns can draw from so that each one of them doesn't have to go through that hearing process and the fining process, sort of take the best ideas from everybody, put it in an area where people can draw from and maybe take that so we can get to the point where we do start schools later. I am going to defer to Marty just for a second so he can say a few words, if you don't mind.

MARTY ISAAC: Thank you, I appreciate that Dave, thank you. I raised my children in Trumbull. It is a wonderful school district. They are in college now so it is really too late for them.

I am here today because the data is so abundantly clear regarding start times that we are harming our children by starting school so early and not doing anything about it. So I am here to advocate for other people's children, really all children. To be very clear this is a health issue. I was here in October of last year when Dr. Maria LaRusso spoke to this Committee in detail about the impact of school start times on adolescent mental health. She is not alone. The AMA, the CDC, the American Psychological Association and others have all issued statements stating that middle school and high school should not start before 8:30 a.m. Yet here we are, in fact in a recent report indicated that Connecticut School start times are among the earliest in the country. We are one of only four states that have an average school start time before 7:45 a.m. Part of the challenge here, it's inertia. That's how we've

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always done it. I woke up this early and I'm fine, and no, and on.

But here's the thing. We know better now. We know that teens are physiologically unable to fall asleep before 11:00 p.m. and require a minimum of nine hours of sleep for their health and wellbeing. Dr. William and well-being. Dr. William Dement, he's a PH.D. in Stanford [Bill rings] at the Stanford School and I am going to conclude very quickly with this. He said sending kids to school at 7:00 a.m. is the equivalent of sending an adult to work at 4:00 in the morning.

Very briefly on the Bill, I am very excited that the group is going to study this. There is reason to believe that, I guess I want to make sure, this is really a health issue. There is reason to believe performance will increase as well, but this is a health issue. And just finally I would caution this group about partial solutions. You know, if there is asbestos in the school we don't clear half of it out and say, you know, we're good to go, it's better than it was before. The science says school should not start before 8:30 a.m. A lot of districts are trying to ease their way from 7:45 a.m. to eight o'clock. We should move to 8:30 a.m. Thank you.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): If I could just briefly say I really appreciate the Committee's willingness to hear it and Representative Gilchrest's advocacy on the issue has been outstanding and I really appreciate it.

MARTY ISAAC: And I would just like to say that I'm pleased to say this is a bipartisan support, I'm a proud democrat from Trumbull, Connecticut and happy

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to sit here with Dave and thank you very much for your support on this.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): You know what, this is what this Committee is all about. So, Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Representative thank you for coming up with your constituent despite his party affiliation [Laughter], I'm kidding, I'm kidding. No I think this is a good work group for the Committee. We've had some discussion in screening and you know, I think there is some concerns that remain with respect to forcing school districts to do things, so on and so forth, the effect on afterschool events and sports and actual daylight hours, so on and so forth. But this is a good start and I think we, the Committee welcomes the conversation and look forward to having a work group take a look at this issue. So thank you for being here today.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Thank you, Senator. And I really appreciate you saying that because, you know, it's very tough for certain members to vote to mandate things in our school districts, Trumbull is an awesomely run school district. I don't want to mandate 'em. I want to sort of overwhelm them with good ideas and solutions so that they will actually take it and so will the neighboring towns so they can't say, oh well, you know the town next to us starts ten minutes in the sports and every other lame excuse we can come up with. So if we can gather together and put all the Best Practices in one sort of envelop and let people pull out what they need, I think that would be the best way to go.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. And can the gentleman from Trumbull, repeat you name for my Clerk?

MARTY ISASC: Sure, it's Marty Isaac and I'm on the Board of Finance in Trumbull.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Gilchrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you both for being here and Representative for your kind words. As you said the science is clear and I think when we know what is best for children we should all work together to make that happen. Certainly there have been barriers but I look forward to working with everyone and putting it all on the table and trying to figure this out. Thank you.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): I appreciate that.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good Afternoon, good to see you.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Good Afternoon, Noreen.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Do you know of any towns doing this. I know towns have studied it? Gilford, Connecticut was one that studied it and I just don't know what the outcome was.

MARTY ISAAC: We have quite a few down, I know Greenwich just did it, Wilton and Newtown are. They did quite successfully a few years ago, Gail, Representative Lavielle, excuse me. Wilton was really the sort of ahead of the curve on this one and I think that it has been successful. It's really been successful all over the country. I mean

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test scores go up, accidents in the morning go down, the overall sense of being, wellbeing of the children seems to rise, the evidence is overwhelming how positive this can be.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): If I can just comment as well, I'd say there are a number of districts that have done this and it truly is a health issue which is where they are seeing the most success. So to me that was most striking in the hearing room the doctor had testified. They had done so many tests trying to understand what is happening with mental health anxiety and other issues and they tried so many things that they tried to alleviate or to reduce it and they have not been successful but what the doctor did say and she didn't say this was a cause of it, it certainly wasn't the cause of it, but what she did comment on is giving children more sleep is a positive step for dealing with this issue. So to me this is a no brainer. The science is very clear and I understand there are challenges of how to implement it but we shouldn't be asking if, we should be asking how are we going to get this done.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you very much for the answer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize for speaking out of order, but I heard the reference to Wilton. Wilton, actually this is quite some time ago, it was maybe 10-15 years ago and at the time they did a very extensive study before putting, before adopting it. And I actually

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wondered if that study had been made generally available. Have either of you seen it?

MARTY ISAAC: I think there are others in the room with a lot more information on this topic.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): I read the Wilton Study and Greenwich was good enough to do the entire hearing process online, you can just go on and watch the videos. It was really interesting and informative.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): I think the Wilton was before you could do video. [Laughter]

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Yeah, that might be true.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Anyway I do know it is available if anyone would like to see it.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): And just to echo what Marty just said, towns like Newtown should be congratulated, they moved their start times later. But to go through all that process, to see all that science and then just move it to eight when really eight-twenty or eight-thirty might be the right number it seemed inadequate. Maybe they didn't have enough knowledge on how to handle the transportation issue which always seems to be the problem is the transportation. It's not so much the will as it is how do we pay for busses and how do we schedule our students.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you very much for your testimony both of you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just very quickly I would be remiss if I didn't welcome

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Representative Rutigliano to the Education Committee. I know you've been working hard on this issue and I wanted to just express my gratitude, that's not putting a mandate but putting a work group together to gather all the beneficial information so that we can make good decisions. So I just want to welcome you.

REP. RUTIGLIANO (123RD): Thank you very much, Representative.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Senator Osten. And I just want to let people know that after Senator Osten we do have a number of students here so the Education Committee usually does try to jump back and forth with students so we will be calling in some students and then going back to the public and so forth.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So Good Afternoon everybody and I really appreciate you all taking time. In interest of your time, I would tell you that I have submitted testimony on another Bill unrelated to the one about what I sit in front of you on dyslexia in opposition to that section with limit it to Alliance Districts.

But what I really am here for today is Senate Bill 314 and you have my written testimony and I would prefer to cede my time to the people that are with me here today. And first I would like the Vice-Chairwoman to give her testimony and then we can sort of go around. But I want to point out that with use today are some Tribal Members who are dressed in the Tribal regalia understanding that this is something that we care about very deeply in our part of Connecticut and I just wanted you to know that they are here in support of this Bill and

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while everybody is not speaking many of them here, and I am going to, at the end of our testimony have them stand behind us so that you can see everybody that's here and what they are wearing. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Senator.

LATOYA CLUFF: Good Afternoon Senators McCrory, Berthel, and Abrams and Representatives Sanchez, McCarty and Barry, and all of the honorable members of the Education Committee, my name is Latoya Cluff and I am honored to appear before you on behalf of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation as our Tribe's Vice Chairwoman and also a former Vice Chairwoman of our Tribal Education Committee.

As Senator Osten had mentioned we are here, well I'm here also with other members of our Tribe and we would like to convey to you the support of SB-314. We want to convey to you our sincere appreciation to the Committee for its consideration of this very important Bill, and to Senators Osten and Berthel for their willingness to sponsor this legislation as well as their due diligence in bringing this forward as a bi-partisan initiative.

Last year, the National Congress of American Indians issued a report that highlighted the need for initiatives like SB-314. The report summarized the efforts of all fifty states to implement educational content about Indigenous people in their K-12 classrooms and found that 87% of the state's history and social studies curriculums included no mention of tribal history after 1900s. In fact, 27 states had no mention of Native people whatsoever in their K-12 curriculum.

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In Connecticut, we are surrounded by Algonquin Indian references. The very word "Connecticut" being among the most prominent (meaning: "Long Tidal River" in Algonquin language). Yet, very few of Connecticut's youth know from where those names originate, let alone the histories, contributions and partnerships that Tribes have made and continue to make to society.

Like you, we see education as a key component to bridging understanding and building a unified community that we all hope will be achieved with passage of this legislation.

Without the existence of an adequate Native studies curriculum, inappropriate references, inaccuracies and false assumptions about Indigenous people go largely unchecked.

One such example is the school mascot controversy, any of us that have been following this are aware of what's going on. Native sports images are often cartoonish or culturally inappropriate perpetuating false narratives and negative stereotypes of Indigenous people. Sports teams exploit these images at our expense and with little regard for the effects they have on our people, particularly our youth and our young adults.

The National Congress of American Indians had this to say in a 2013 report on Native mascots:

When exposed to these images, the self-esteem of Native youth is harmfully impacted, their self-confidence erodes, and their sense of identity is severely damaged. Specifically, these stereotypes affect how Native youth view the world and their place in society, while also affecting how society

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views the Native peoples. This creates an inaccurate portrayal of Native peoples and again their contributions to society.

On a much broader perspective, the prejudices toward Indigenous people are deeply rooted within the fabric of American society.

In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther said, "Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or to feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, and our folklore all exalt it."

It's time to change the narrative about Indigenous people for the better, and education is the key solution to do so. As you know, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation has been here long before the existence of this beautiful state we all call home.

And we look forward to the opportunity to tell future generations about the beauty of our culture and the complexity of our unique history and legacy, which is what we do each day at our Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to come before you and we hope that we have full endorsement for Senate Bill 314. Thank you so much.

PHYLLIP THOMAS: Kuweeqàhsun. Nutusowees Nàw Wôquhs
My name is Seeing Fox, Greetings. I am the

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Treasurer of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Youth Council and my English name is Phyllip Thomas.

I am here to speak on my support of Senate Bill 314 which discusses the inclusion of Native American studies as a part of the social studies curriculum.

I am a proud Pequot and Narragansett Native student at Pace University in New York, graduating this spring with a liberal studies degree in Political Science and Economics.

I grew up in Mashantucket where my people have a Child Development Center but not an elementary school or a high school, so most of us attend Ledyard Public Schools throughout.

When I reminisce on my experience growing through these schools, it really isn't about the Native American history that I learned but the lack thereof. A long time ago most of what we know is that New London County was Pequot land before it was taken from us.

I'm here today to urge leaders to take a step in the right direction toward the full inclusion of my people and our views within Connecticut society and within our public education system.

Because my Pequot history isn't accurately told, other Connecticut CT students can never really understand how and why I continue to be hurt by exclusion and misunderstanding. Intergenerational trauma runs tough us as thick as our Native blood because of the problems we've faced and continue to face as people handed down through generations not to mention during the school learning process tell us clearly that we don't matter or lies on top of that.

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There was a point in my young adulthood where I had lost myself completely separated from my Native way of live because of the lack of learning in these schools. The main reasoning behind it was coming through a system where very few like myself and when they taught about our history, it was about theirs and not min.

What we all need are schools that will work to create consciousness and bridge the understanding between Native and non-Native students. Connecticut students learning about our communities, culture, and our history and contributions can help us to build those bridges more quickly.

I speak to you today not through anger but through proud of who I am and what we can accomplish together. I am here because my ancestors died for my right to stand up here and speak to you today. I am here for the ones without a voice who can't stand for themselves. I am here for our future generations.

In closing, I want to share words from a great Native leader sharing wisdom about identity and leadership. Her name was Wilma Mankiller, and she said, "An Indian is an Indian regardless of the degree of Indian blood or which little government card they do or do not possess."

Kutaputuyumuw, thank you all.

MICHAEL THOMAS: Wuyeekeesuk, Mr. Chairman and Joint Committee Members. I want to begin on behalf of Mashantucket Pequot people by extending our thanks to Senator Berthel, Senator Osten and all other supporters or sponsoring of Senate Bill 314. The proper way for us to thank you in our language is to

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say kutaputuyumuw and I deliver that message to you today, that is how you thank a group of people in the Pequot language.

It is important for us to understand that broader cultural inclusion helps all Connecticut students, not just Native America Connecticut students. The breadth, and the depth and the quality of education in Connecticut will increase if this enactment in fact passes. It is important for not only the history but the current existence of our people to be exposed to Connecticut students today.

For us Tribal Communities is the greatest resource that a Tribe has. This is where are people are, this is where our territory is, this is where our culture is and to be able to connect Connecticut students with the community attempt to conserve and develop these resources would modernize the teaching about Native America people for all Connecticut students.

In addition to learning about these resources Connecticut students deserve to share in more of these resources. In my written testimony I made a reference to one of these treasures, one of our human resources from the Indian country that sits inside Connecticut, her name is Trudy Lamb-Richmond. She is an Elder and a traditional storyteller from our Schaghticoke Tribal relatives. Trudy because of her own efforts and because she spent some time working in our museum has been exposed to hundreds of Connecticut school children as the cultural treasure of Connecticut that she is, not just of Connecticut Tribes. And I assure you that every single one of those children that were exposed to Trudy were better off for it in terms of their

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understanding of our history and of their own. I also know that every single one of the Connecticut school children who did not get exposure to Trudy Lamb-Richmond represent a missed opportunity that we shouldn't continue to miss as people of Connecticut.

And so, we speak strongly in support of sb 314. We also speak strongly in support on the other needs that our young people have, and by our young people we are talking about all young people in Connecticut, things that would help not only Native students but non-native students.

Learning about and creating trauma informed learning environments in Connecticut schools is a huge need. Learning about youth resilience and what it takes to build youth resilience and what intergenerational trauma does to destroy youth resilience are worthwhile topics for learning not only by students but by teachers in Connecticut.

For us, the core of our existence as Tribal Peoples is relationships and there is nothing that is damaged more by this exclusionary history than the relationships that we enjoy with ourselves and with folks who do not share our history.

And so we urge you to support this enactment but also to put the other things in place that would make this enactment even more meaningful and even more helpful for Tribal youth but also for all Connecticut youth.

Perhaps there will be a time when, beyond the five Tribes of Connecticut where our young people are actually learning about the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples and they are learning about the social forces that cause

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the United States and Canada to be the last two countries on earth to sign-on to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We need comprehensive learning about Indigenous Peoples issues and about Tribal neighbors right here in Connecticut. That is part of what this Bill will produce for all of us and indeed it is something for all of us. Kutaputuyumuw.

JOAN MASSEY: Good Afternoon, my name is Joan Massey and it's an honor for me to serve as the Director of the Department of Education for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.

What I can say is that the Tribal Nation is at the core of Connecticut's history and you can see that represented throughout this building, yet we are here to ask for support for this Bill so that this history can actually be placed in the curriculum throughout the State. I can speak to the technicalities of the curriculum writing process as a former teacher, chief academic officer and superintendent but that I really want to talk about is the diversification of our curriculum and our history curriculum in general and the inclusion of all of the people.

In talking to children today who attend Ledyard Public Schools when I ask them about their experience in the schools what they tell me is that they feel isolated and they don't feel valued. And then to make that even worse there is no part of the program that speak to them, to their family or to their contributions to this State. We have the resources right here when it comes to writing this curriculum. We have people here to support and help move this forward. If you come to the museum it is

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abundant with information but more importantly people that know the history of our State and how that can be easily included within our curriculum today.

This is a matter of respect and is a matter of respect for the people who were here long before us so we ask you to support Senate Bill 314. Thank you.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): And just to sort of bring everything all together. I just want you to know that the Mohegan Tribe would have been here also today, today is a day of recognition for them and so they cannot be here. You have some written testimony from them and know that the Eastern Pequot, the Schaghticoke and the Golden Hill Paugussett are three State recognized Tribes who are also interested in having their culture represented so I just wanted to make sure that you knew that is not, this is not one Tribal Nation, this is five different Tribes with different components and different histories that have happened. Thank you. We stand ready for questions.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Senator. And you answered one of my questions, which is, you know, the curriculum will focus on, you know, Northeastern Woodland Native America Tribes and others and so thank you. Senator Berthel.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator Osten, thank you for organizing this group of visitors today to our State Capitol who represent the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation and Vice-Chairman Cluff thank you for being here as well and thank you for your testimony and thank you all for that.

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You know, you answered, I had a whole lot of questions that I was going to ask and you answered just about all of them. You know, I think that as the Committee considers this particular piece of legislation and it's been brought out clearly already this morning or this afternoon that I am a cosponsor of this Bill so clearly I stand in support of it. One of the things that the Education Committee struggles with every year and Senator Osten you and I have talked about this on past Bills in this Circle upstairs in the Senate is that we have approaches every year to the Committee for new mandates for curriculum.

A couple of years ago I was proud to cosponsor and get to the finish line a curriculum mandate regarding teaching of Holocaust and genocide and I think that today I sit here for exactly the same reason in strong support of yet another mandate, curriculum mandate because this education is so important particularly because of where we live. And you brought out that our State name is an Indian name.

If you look at the Seal that is on the wall behind me it is representative of what, if anyone actually knows what that Seal represents and I do, it is representative of our interaction when the settlers came to Connecticut there interaction with the Indigenous people as they came up the Connecticut River. Our State Motto is something that represents in Latin what the settlers were taught by the Indigenous People, the Native Indians of Connecticut that were living here well before us. For us to think for a moment that we are not properly teaching this part of history to students in our schools in Connecticut is very disturbing to me and it's a

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large part of the reason why I feel it is so important along with Senator Osten on a nonpartisan or a bipartisan, however you want to say it, to support this legislation. And I think one of the nicest things that I heard among many that our Commissioner of Education, Commissioner Cardona spoke to is that his agency, his Department is also fully in support of getting this curriculum in place. And we know, we know very year when we are approached with new mandates for curriculum, we know that the Department comes back to us and says, well, you know, we're short on resources, it's gonna take some time. Last year we passed the Bill on out of both chambers, signed by the governor for a curriculum mandate for African-American and Latino Studies which I was also a cosponsor of. These are all important parts of what we should be teaching in our public schools in Connecticut and they do not truly have any kind of political boundaries which is really wonderful and it's part of what I think we should be doing as an Education Committee when we sit around on this desk and we bring Bills to the floor of our respective chambers.

So with that, I really, I guess I just wanted to make a statement in support of this. I really don't have any questions. You answered all of my questions. I hope that the Committee will see merit in bringing this forward and getting this out for a debate on the floor of both chambers and then ultimately to the governor's office. But thank you again, very much for being here. For those of you who are sitting in the audience behind those that testified, thank you for taking the time to be up here in Hartford today as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Comey.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you, very much. Thank you, Senator Osten and Berthel for bringing this to us, this important Bill. Thank you also to the Mashantucket Tribe that is here through representative as well as the other Tribes the Mohegans and other Tribes that are here in Connecticut.

I just wanted to give a little bit of support. I have had the pleasure of getting to know Native peoples from throughout the country through my career aside from being in the legislature and actually was through the Mohegan, was through, I'm sorry the Mashantucket Foxwoods we did the first year, we did the Native American Music Awards which for the past 20 years we've been touring over the country to bring this, bring your music to the people and to honor the musicians and the music that have, that are so important to your history.

I think it's important to recognize and to educate everyone in our schools and your peers that among, throughout our country Native people have a higher rate of suicide especially among the youth, the health disparities would be shocking to you if we went into it, increased poverty throughout the country and I think that anything that we can do as a State and as a legislature to broaden the understanding of the trials and the tribulations that you have gone through and to promote understanding among the peers and the youth in our community is certainly really well worth any sort of additional mandate that the schools may feel, especially of its relevance to the history of our State. So I also don't have any questions

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particularly but thank you so much for bringing this forward and for your dedication to creating some understanding throughout our youth community.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and I to would like to welcome everyone today and for your very clear testimony. To the education person, you mentioned some resources that you have because I think and Senator Berthel outlined clearly some of the difficulties we face on the Education Committee is looking at sometimes the amount of time needed for a curriculum, what the resources that are available and how we get the information out to our districts. This particular proposal is not a course but to look at our curriculum to add into our curriculum but you mentioned resources so, I'm wondering if you could elaborate just a little bit more on that aspect?

JOAN MASSEY: Yes, thank you. I think what I would like to highlight is that especially through the museum there is an abundance of history that is already there, it's really a matter of combining people from across the State to put together a, you know, full scope and sequence K-12 of history standards and topics that we can put into the curriculum in a natural way. I think, you know, sometimes we don't like to look at things as an add-on and now we have to add this to the program that we're already doing. There's ways that you can really assign this to the nonfiction reading and writing standards that go along with the Common Core Curriculum.

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The natural resources that I would highlight is this community and the other communities within the State. I go to Michael Thomas all the time and so there is no shortage and we are happy and willing to help support brining the communities together and hosting some of these procedures to get this going.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): And I also would point out that the Mohegan's also have a museum that would be helpful and there is some curriculum that has been partially developed at the State Department of Education that can be coordinated with this and I just really think that this should be integrated within the Social Studies curriculum so it really shows that these were people that started Connecticut before Connecticut had Connecticut's name. Go ahead.

MICHAEL THOMAS: Thank you and the Pequot pronunciation of that by the way is Con-nee-tuck-it [phonetic]. So that is where you Connecticut State name comes from. But I want to speak about resources and then a very short citation of a piece of Pequot history that I bet almost no one in the room knows.

And so first in terms of support resources, first I would focus upon technical support resources that the State has not taken advantage of mostly because they come from National Intertribal Indian Organizations. The first that you should know about is the National Indian Education Association and there are others I won't bore you with a long list. Obviously Tribes across the country have had to tackle this issue and our national organizations have their fingers on the pulse of this issue all

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across the United States and Canada as well for some of these issues. And so benchmarking support.

There is a second thing that I wanted to mention because these are Intertribal organizations that cover the country you literally would have access to models of curricular adjustment that have occurred throughout America that would at least give leaders specific examples to consider about how you want to adjust curriculum.

And finally the piece of support that all of us who have ever lived a lift of elected life have to pay attention to and that would be financial support. There are federal funds available to community based organizations, Tribal community based organizations for specifically this kind of effort. It would take a long and technical conversation to talk about how to access those kinds of things, but that is what possible when we begin to collaborate in these areas.

For the short piece of history, Pequot History, and just an example of the kinds of things that all students in Connecticut should be exposed to, myself, obviously my son and many others in this room come from a Pequot woman whose name was Annie George. Annie George had a brother whose name was Amos George. Amos George taught three U.S. Presidents to hunt and fish right here in the State of Connecticut as he took care of the McLean Game Reserve for the United States Senator McLean right here in Connecticut. And so there's actually photographic evidence of the Pequot man teaching U.S. Presidents to hunt and fish in Connecticut. Amos George is a part of the fabric of Connecticut not just a part of the fabric of the Mashantucket

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Pequot people. And so finally I'll share with you a comment that Amos shared about Senator McLean himself because he obviously loved the man like a brother. He said that he was a fine man and he closed by saying, "you can always tell a lot about a man by the way he hunts and fishes." [Laughing]

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Thank you so much. So, we have any other questions.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So, I'm just going to invite everybody up to stand behind so that you can see the people that are here today.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And I just wanted to say we usually don't clap, but I feel that this is a moment that we need to clap [Applause]. Thank you, Senator Osten.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): With your indulgence I just want to take a picture too!

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Sure, [Laughter]. Thank you, Senator. Thank you. So what we're gonna do next, we have a huge number of students that are present here that are going to testify. Some are going to testify on climate change, others are going to testify on edTPA. We also have public officials that are still waiting so I am going to be going from student to public official. I also want to ask if the students are, for instance I have a number of students here from Connecticut River Academy and so forth, so if you're in groups, it would be nice if you could come up in groups and maybe summarize what you are going to say and that way we can move quickly. So who I have next on the list is Greg Romprey. Greg, if you have members they can come up. I appreciate that. Turn on your mic.

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GREG ROMPREY: Good Morning, Representative Sanchez and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Gregory Romprey. I am a 17-year-old high school senior. I attend Connecticut River Academy in East Hartford and reside in Colchester, Connecticut.

JORDAN RICE: My name is Jordan Rice. I also attend Connecticut River Academy, 16 years old, currently in my junior year of high school and I reside in Manchester, Connecticut.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Can you repeat your name again?

JORDAN RICE: Jordan Rice.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay, thank you.

GREG ROMPREY: Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 5215, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

This bill is important to me because, without it, our future generations will be left in the dark. Our current students are our future Leaders. If they are not aware of the threats to our society, they will not be prepared to fight them. If they are left uneducated our planet will go further into disrepair as they look at it as a spectator. We can all see firsthand what happens when people are not aware of the effects of their actions. Look at the vaping epidemic or even climate change in its current state. When people are not educated on the consequences they will have no reason to cease them.

JORDAN RICE: Continuing off my partner's point. Students today are the ones that will be facing the brunt of climate change as we know it. And

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lawmakers, excuse me, need to ensure that future generations have the knowledge and tools they need to mitigate and adapt to these impacts. An issue of this magnitude cannot only be an optional topic. It has to be taught to every student from every background. Not teaching climate change is like not U.S. History to put it bluntly. The only difference is that climate change is a significant issue that we are facing right now.

I very much urge you guys to take into consideration House Bill 5215. And while I do think it is a matter of choice but a matter of need and will not affect any students or any administration from what I've seen in any negative way other than a positive way and making the people of this State more knowledgeable as anyone in the Union. Thank you so much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And I want to thank you two young men for being here present today and testifying. Do we have any questions from? Indulge me.

REP. FARNEN (132ND): I'm a newbie, it's okay, Brian Farnen. I just want to thank you guys, it really means a lot hearing you speak from the heart and please stay active in this fight. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Senator Abrams.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Oh, gentlemen, just a moment. Gentlemen can I ask you something? I apologize if you said this because I came in while you were testifying, but I just had a question for you. First of all where you from?

JORDAN RICE: I am from Manchester, Connecticut.

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SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): And you go to Manchester High or where do you go?

JORDAN RICE: I attend Connecticut River Academy in East Hartford.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Excellent and you, sir?

GREG ROMPREY: I also attend Connecticut Rive Academy but I'm from Colchester, Connecticut.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Excellent. I was a former teacher and high school administrator and I strongly support your efforts here and I appreciate the fact that you are using our system of government to make the change happen. And I hope that you've learned something from this and continue your advocacy once we pass this. You know, the challenge won't be over so we need good people like you in there fighting for it. So thank you very much for being here.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): I do would, I'm over here. Hi. I would also like to welcome you to the Education Committee. You gave very clear and compelling testimony but my question to you is are you receiving instruction currently in your school on climate change?

GREG ROMPREY: Yes, we are receiving heavy instruction. Our school is very focused on the environmental sciences and advanced manufacturing. This is a specialty that our school does. And yes personally we are very heavily taught climate instruction in our school, yes.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): And yourself?

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JORDAN RICE: Yes, so our school is a magnet school, one of the focuses of our school is on environmental science. So our school in particular has a very focus on climate change. That may not be the case with other public schools as they focus on more general approach so.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you. Thank you very much and I wish you both much continued success. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, gentlemen. Next up I'd like to call up Katie Grant. Hi, Katie, saw you last night at CCSU.

KATIE GRANT: It's good to see you again. Good afternoon Representative Sanchez and Members of the Education Committee. My name is Katherine Grant, I'm a masters student at UConn studying curriculum instruction. I completed my undergraduate degrees in English and secondary English ed and I completed edTPA during spring 2019 during my student teaching experience. I am here to speak to you in favor of House Bill 5376 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDTPA AS PART OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS.

edTPA narrowed by student teaching experience and required me to teach to a test. The inclusion of this lesson sequence that this test requires forced me to change the style of teaching I had developed to best suit the learners in my classroom in order to adhere to what would be rated highly by an outside observer. It creates a cookie cutter idea of what it means to be a good teacher which negates the diversity of individual pursuing teaching and the diversity of students within our classrooms.

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The feedback edTPA provided me did nothing to support my development as a future educator and was scripted, standardized and disconnected thoughts from somebody who did not know me.

The feedback that I received from my university supervisor and from my cooperating teacher gave me a nuanced level of insight and that far exceeded the simplistic and reductive feedback I received from edTPA. This assessment creates another financial barrier to becoming an educator. We are rapidly approaching a point in which those barriers will prevent well-qualified diverse candidates from pursuing the most important of professions.

If we are committed to diversifying the teachers who teach in Connecticut's classrooms we cannot be creating more barriers. This test will do that.

In becoming a teacher we talk a lot about assessment one the most accurate and representative ways of assessing our students growth and performance. We also talk a lot about inaccurate and unfair assessments can do more harm than good. I am taught and expected to do better than this by my students. I in turn expect that the legislature will do better than this by me.

I am the highly qualified teacher candidate that the States seeks to prepare through every institution and every program. Please hear me when I say that this test did not allow me to accurately represent the training I've received and was harmful to my students in the process. It is imperative that the implementation of edTPA is halted. The assessment of teacher candidates that occurs under edTPA is one that I can guarantee will inhibit the future of education within our State. I urge you to support

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this Bill. The future of my profession, and my students depend on it. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): [Bell rings] Wow, that was right on point. Senator Abrams.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you for your testimony. Can you give us a specific example of what you're talking about so that people have a better understanding of what this test is and how it does differ from what you learned when you were in your teacher training program, like that application?

KATIE GRANT: So specifically regarding the portfolio assessment itself, so the language that it used was different. To me it felt like the banking model of education. So that is a Freire concept which basically says that as teacher I have all the content and I give that to the student. They have nothing that they can bring to the classroom beyond what I can give them. And this test and the way in which it asks you to instruct your students, it's not project based, it's not creative, it's not generative it just says what is the worksheet that I can give to my students to assess that they've done a concept. Which in some aspects is an important part of teaching but to force me into a corner and say that my best teaching has to be a worksheet was insulting to the academic preparation I received and it was insulting to the students in my classroom because they deserve so much better than that.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you for making it clear what you are asked to do, appreciate it.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And Katie, you know, it was an interesting talk last night with the professor from

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Rutgers University and of course at CCSU. I know that some of the members couldn't make it, I mean most of us were invited but we're busy. So I was just, you know, a comment because in this talk last night there was a group of students not just from UConn, come from CCUS as well and we heard from professors from UConn as well. And it was just alarming to hear how this is affecting particularly students of color that are trying to get into the profession and earlier today I asked the Commissioner of Education if he supported edTPA and he did say that he supported edTPA. So I think we're gonna have to have some really deep discussion moving forward because I really want to see the benefit our students who are going into a classroom to teach other students and I think is key here and we want to make sure we're doing the right thing. And again this all stems from one institution, that didn't follow through, and everyone has to pay the price and that is how I look at it. Cause when I went to grade school I do recall in second grade when my teacher, one person was talking, and the teacher kept on saying be quiet then everyone had to sit down and write 100 times, "We do not talk in class" until we're spoken to or whatever it may be. And I remember being punished for that for another student doing it and I just don't think it's right.

KATIE GRANT: And beyond punishing the students who are like me and seek to become teachers it punishes the students in our classroom because I'm an educator who has to teach to a test, who has to fit a specific mold on what good instruction means and that instruction is not responsive to the individual needs of each of the students in our classrooms.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. Is Senator Cohen? Hi, Senator.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Hello, Mr. Chairman, Representative Sanchez and distinguished members of the Education Committee. It is a pleasure to be here today. I am here to speak in support of the working group on school start times. I have a constituent here Dr. Craig Canapari who I will introduce but I just wanted to briefly explain to you why I'm up here in support of the Bill.

Prior to becoming a legislator I was on the Guilford Board of Education and I was on the school start times taskforce in Guilford. Connecticut is one of the worst offenders when it comes to school start times. We know that we need to be starting school at approximately 8:30 a.m. according to the American Academy of Pediatrics and now the CDC and yet most of Connecticut school, high schools start prior to 7:45 a.m. In Guilford our taskforce was only able to shift school start times 15 minutes for the high school which still gets us earlier than 7:45 a.m. because it is so complicated. And it really needs to be done at the State level, that's what we were hearing over and over again from administrators because there is so many complications involved with afterschool activities, afterschool sports. But we just can't afford to wait on this any longer. So I am really pleased to see that the concept was brought forward by the Committee and I want to turn my time over to Dr. Craig Canapari who is the Director of the Pediatric Sleep Center at Yale and obviously a sleep expert and physician. So, with that, Dr. Canapari.

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DR. CANAPARI: Thank you very much. So I'm a pediatric sleep physician and I am also a parent and as Senator Cohen said I am here in support of Bill 5217. I moved back to Connecticut seven years ago and when I started seeing kids in my neighborhood get on the school bus at 6:20 in the morning I knew that we had a problem.

As a sleep physician and a parent, I know that sleep deprivation is all too common in our children. Several years ago, a study of 60,000 teens in the U.S. showed that 90 percent of them were not getting adequate sleep at night. Imagine if we said that 90 percent of our teens did not have clean water to drink or they do not have schools without asbestos or other toxic environmental exposures. Why is there.

Well the culprit is the interaction between the natural sleep schedule of teenagers and inappropriately early school start times. When kids enter adolescence, their natural sleep schedule shifts later so what is natural for them to sleep between 11:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. or even midnight to 9:00 a.m. Now the majority of the students in Connecticut are getting on the bus before six in the morning. Some students in our district is close to 6:00 a.m.

On the weekends they sleep in late and their natural sleep schedule is three hours later. So they are essentially coming from the west coast to the east coast every week for school. They are essentially have what we call "social jet lag" all the time.

The consequences of chronic sleep deprivation are manifold and I don't have enough time to enumerate them here but they include a higher likelihood of

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dropping out, being obese, using drugs or alcohol or dying in a car accident. It makes sense, sleep is as vital as breathing clean air but there are no laws protecting the sleep of teens although we do have laws protecting the sleep of doctors, pilots and truck drivers.

There is a solution that helps address these problems in all school districts, rich or poor, urban or rural. That is later school start times. A preponderance of research shows that later start times help teens sleep longer and helps prevent the issues associated with sleep deprivation. A high school start of 8:30 a.m. or later was recommended in 2014 by the American Academy of Pediatrics. In 2015 the Centers for Disease Control followed suit and since then innumerable professional bodies have supported this recommendation. Across the country major school districts such as Minneapolis and Seattle have put this into place. In Connecticut Wilton, Greenwich, Guilford, New Canaan and Westport have changed or are in the process of moving school later.

I can tell you I travel the State talking to school boards, everybody supports the research but it's difficult to get this done. In our district we spent, I think I spent six years getting 15 minutes. You know, it was not the best return on investment, I think we need to do more. [Bell rings]. Like Mr. Isaacs who spoke earlier, half measures are not enough. In the past year the Connecticut State Legislature passed statewide Bill mandating that no high school start before 8:30 a.m. I believe this to be a public health emergency and it needs to be addressed quickly. Thank you.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. When I was groin' up, I wished I could go to school at noon, never mind, seven or eight o'clock. Noon was perfect for me. I was a night person so I love staying up at night. Senator Abrams.

SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): I hate to admit that the first Committee that I was on, on this issues was about 30 years ago, so I do appreciate that it took you six years to move it 15 minutes. I think this is a public health issue and I am fully in support of it. Like I said, I've been looking at it a long time now, it's complicated, it is difficult to do. I've looked at the issue in two different school districts. Some of the same questions come up and I won't ask all of them, but I will ask you this given your expertise. One of the arguments that always came up was that if we start later kids will just go to bed later and so it really won't accomplish what it's meant to do. Can you speak to that?

DR. CANAPARI: Certainly. That is perhaps the top myth about changing school start times. Minneapolis was the first major district to do this and this was in the late 90s. And they found when they moved high school start times about an hour later the teenagers were actually getting 45 minutes more of sleep and some of them actually seemed to go to bed earlier. Now, nobody is quite sure why this is but hypothesis was they were actually able to finish their homework more efficiently because they were less sleepy. Many studies have looked at this and none of them have shown that teens just shift later. They all seem to get more sleep and the amount of sleep they get is proportioned to the magnitude of the start time change.

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SENATOR ABRAMS (13TH): Thank you very much. I think one of the other issues that has always puzzled me why we haven't done something about this is we're also talking about young drivers who are sleep deprived and that is another piece of it, not having to do with education, that has always been very concerning to me.

DR. CANAPARI: May I speak to that? Actually a district in Wyoming moved their start time from 7:20 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and they actually saw, I think something like at 60 percent reduction in car accidents in the town.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you. Senator Cohen thanks so much and thank you so much for your testimony. I had actually asked a previous testifier if he knew what had happened in Guilford because I certainly remember reading all the work you did in the Shoreline Papers. I just couldn't remember what the outcome was, so you're 15 minutes. And I know Guilford really, really looked at this issue. My only question to you is knowing, you know, that idea of 15 minutes what was driving that they wouldn't take a bigger jump and was transportation of students from the different schools an issue, or is that something that was worked out?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I think we could both speak to this because both Dr. Canapari and I were on the taskforce together. But I will say just moving 15 minutes was tremendously complicated and as much as it pained us in the end to only move it 15 minutes and now the start time is 7:40, so again still earlier than even 7:45 a.m. which is the Connecticut

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average. We are one of the earliest in the entire State but we did know that change would be cumulative according to experts like Dr. Canapari so we felt good in that. The geography of our town which is very similar to your town, Representative Kokoruda of Madison, it is very long and transportation has to go up north and then get back down south to the schools in order to pick-up the next bus routes. So we had tremendous complications in terms of how we were going to do this without impacting the other schools and keeping our budget intact which was just nearly impossible as we were finding out. So we ended up shaving time off of passing bell schedule at the high school, a little bit there. We ended up finding some efficiencies in the middle and elementary schools pick-up times in the morning and so we did as much as we could by finding efficiencies. But again we just weren't having the impact that we could and should.

And another obvious complicating factor which I spoke to you at the beginning is the fact that there are afterschool sports involved and we are part of CIAC. There are other schools that obviously wouldn't be making the change at the same time and so then we're looking at, okay so do we take our kids, our high school students out of school in order to participate in games and other activities that might be taking place afterschool. If you do this statewide you don't encounter those same problems, everybody needs those same shifts. So again to say it's complicated is a tremendous understatement and, you know, as Dr. Canapari said, he was working on this even before I came on to the Board of Education and became part of this taskforce, but we just went around and around on it

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and the cost associated with it would have been tremendous. And quite frankly I hope my administrators wouldn't fault me for saying this but many of them said, I wish this was the one time I wish there were a statewide mandate.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Could you just explain to me, what was driving the extra cost, these new costs?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): We would have to provide more busses in order to not impact the other schools and we looked at flip-flopping elementary which seems to make the most sense to be honest with you, our youngest students again, I'll let a sleep expert speak to this but our youngest students seem to be up earliest. That seems to be biologically in line where they're at and our older students tend to need more sleep and sleep later because they are going to sleep so much later. I mean I have a 15-year-old son and I can tell you probably from the time he was about 12 I notice that he just couldn't fall asleep. He would be in his bed, he'd be reading a book. He just wasn't ready to go to sleep. And so it's not a matter of put your kids to bed earlier, get them off screen. My kids were not on screen. My kids were going to bed early. He just couldn't settle his body down and so I witnessed that firsthand. But we were trying to accommodate parents not changing elementary school schedules, not changing middle school schedule. We would have to add busses so transportation became our largest cost.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you.

DR. CANAPARI: I just want to say one thing to that to, for many districts busing is a really significant part of the school budget. The problem

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is by that rationale school board budgets are balanced on the count that facts that teens are going to be sleep deprived. So to do things, like we could have solved this issue from going to three bus runs from two bus runs and nobody would have to get on the bus before the sun was up, but that was gonna cost a substantial amount of money. But is it really right to take sleep from teenagers to allow us to budget school budgets. I just don't think it's fair they are bearing a disproportionate burden.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, I have to say how many times do I sit in the parking lot at the high school and watch all those empty busses go out when its high school level but I certainly, my biggest Town, Madison would have all the exact same issues with it. But in the end what was the main issue, you didn't want to flip. Because I know it's the little kids are the ones that are up very early.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): That was a main issue. We also talked about being able, you're talking about empty seats on busses. That brings up another issue in terms of state requirements and there was a lot of discussion whether or not the kids that don't take the bus anyway could sign a waiver allowing the buses to sort of consolidate their ridership and get more kids on the buses. A lot of discussion over state law, what that looked like. We went to CUBE, you know, asked them their legal advice on it and ultimately our attorneys didn't feel comfortable that the kids could sign a waiver regardless of whether or not they knew they'd never take the bus. It was like you needed to have a ride for every student.

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DR. CANAPARI: This also comes down to the haves and have nots. The kids that can get a ride or have their own car to drive to work can actually sleep in later than kids that can't. That's why it's more equitable to actually change start times.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Well I know my husband picked up our grandchildren two days ago because my kids were out, the parents were out of town and they were in the car on the way to school at ten after seven for high school and that is a very early start in the day to say the least especially if they are up till eleven o'clock. But I know you had worked on it before, that was great to hear. Thank you very much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and welcome to the Education Committee. Thank you for your testimony today. I was just reading, I believe, Westport District was looking to change their high school times and the parents came out with a petition in, they were in favor of looking at the high school time but could you comment as the expert on what you would do with the elementary school starting times cause that's where the opposition came in while they were switching high school which people were favorable upon, they were worried about what that would do with the school districts with the elementary school starting times.

DR. CANAPARI: We would joke on the start time committee that everybody is fine with changing the start times but they don't want to change the end of the day times. That is where the problem is. There is a lot less research looking at the effect of

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start times on young children than high school students. We know that biologically elementary school children are, they go to sleep early, it's common sense. You elementary schoolers go to bed between 7:30 and 8:30 typically and they will get up between 6:30 and 7:30 in the morning. We also know that they tend to fad in the late afternoon from talking to educators and the way we were able to make a change in Guilford, even a very modest one without cost was shifting everything later but then we have elementary schoolers getting off the bus at 4:30 in the afternoon just totally exhausted. The alternative would be to move elementary school times earlier but when you think about it, in Connecticut we have a lot of dark roads, roads without sidewalks, it's not safe, it's actually not safe to have anyone standing out in the road in the dark waiting for a school bus. There are many documented incidents of kids getting hit by cars while they were waiting for the school bus but it is especially dangerous for younger children. So I think that is one of the concerns. It's also, every town has different concerns. But say a high schooler is caring for their elementary schooler younger sibling afterschool this is a concern that was raised. I mean some of these are actual cases but they have to be addressed in a systematic way.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Well thank you very much, and if I just may, Mr. Chair, on the actual bus ridership I know that we discussed that at the Education Committee level in the past and seems like statute is, there is a strict reading of the statue needing because the superintendents believe you have to have an actual seat on the bus but we've been told by the legal department that as long as you

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supply a seat on the bus for anyone who needs it you're in compliance actually was what the intent of the statute was. So that may help as you move forward, thank you very much.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Napoli.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here and thank you for your testimony. And I apologize if I missed it but can you tell me if the CIAC has weighed in on this conversation and what their thoughts may be on it.

DR. CANAPARI: That's funny you should ask. I believe it was in 2014 they actually put in some pretty comprehensive language in support of districts changing start times, acknowledging research demonstrates that the health of students athletes is paramount and later start times can help them be healthier. In the more recent documentation it has been softened due to pressure from athletic directors. The problem with this is that the evidence is actually clear that student athletes are harmed by inadequate sleep. There was actually a study done on it by the Orthopedic Department at UConn that showed that student athletes who were getting less sleep were more likely to have orthopedic injuries. So there is, it certainly can be inconvenient to have to change the time of games, districts start at different times. But we're really in the business of educating kids and keeping them safe. There is no doubt athletics are important but I think that they can work around it. If you look at Greenwich they've had many championships since they moved their start times to

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8:30 in the morning. So, I know I diverged a little bit from your question.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Representative Gilchrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry I was late, just wanted to thank you both Senator and Doctor for your advocacy and I look forward to working with you both on a statewide level.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. thank you for your testimony. So again going back, we are going to be switching to student, and public, and public officials. So next I have on the list is Shannon Marimon and then after Shannon there is a group of students from Connecticut River Academy. I have Kaylyn, Dylan, Ryshad, Shanie, Julie and Carter. If you're present and possibly can you come up as a group after Shannon, I'd appreciate that.

SHANNON MARIMON: Good Afternoon, Chairman Sanchez, and honorable members of the Education Committee. My name is Shannon Marimón, I'm the executive director of ReadyCT. I've submitted written testimony on several Bills will highlight a few key points on some of those.

First, ReadyCT supports Senate Bill 173 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT. Connecticut is regularly cites as having one of the top public school systems in the nation. Of course, that is true for some students, but certainly not all. Because simultaneously year after year, Connecticut boasts one of the largest achievement gaps in the nation. As mentioned by

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Commissioner Cardona the framework proposal in Senate Bill 173 will allow for an "apples to apples" analysis of public education across our state. It's a way to better understand and systematically address achievement and opportunity gaps, and it's long overdue

Next, ReadyCT supports House Bill 5380 the Literacy Bill. Connecticut must invest in early literacy. We most certainly cannot consider a student ready for secondary education or the world of work if he or she is illiterate. Only percent of Connecticut's eighth graders hit the proficient mark in reading in 2019. And research indicates many Connecticut districts are not integrating scientifically based approaches to reading instruction. Also consider the economic impact of a literate citizenry. The cost of illiteracy to the U.S. in economic terms is \$300.8 billion dollars in lost business productivity, lost earnings, welfare, crime, health and other social justice problems. There are few things we know for certain in education but one of them that we do know is how students best learn to read. It would be pure negligence not to make this a form of instruction uniformly available to all students here in Connecticut.

Regarding Senate Bill 314, ReadyCT supports this Bill regarding school counselors. Given the pivotal roles counselors play in supporting students success, insuring an already thinly spread staff dedicates every four out of five hours in direct service to students isn't just a good idea, it's a necessary one. With that said, we hope school counselors continue to build their own networks with colleagues, parents and partners in higher ed and industry in order to provide relevant personalized

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supports in the best interests of students. And then we also have comments about opposition to the Bill around NTPA but I know I'm at time. So happy to take any questions.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any questions. Representative Haines.

REP. HAINES (34TH): Hi, Good Afternoon and thank you for coming and I was just wondering what your thoughts are on edTPA?

SHANNON MARIMON: Okay, thank you. So we are in opposition to House Bill 5276. You know, the Bill is looking to dismantle edTPA and we heard very compelling testimony from a student who is living the experience on the student side. I, in full transparency was at the Department of Education when the EPAC, the Educator Preparation Advisory Council was established in 2012 and that was a very vast and varied stakeholder group that represented K-12 educators, educator preparation programs, higher Ed and community members. And they studied the opportunity for preservice portfolio assessment so it was not an input drive assessment but an outcomes driven assessment that studies the student teaching experience over time and does it in a much more formative way and edTPA was the identified assessment over a four year period of research and brining in other states who are using the instrument and understanding exactly how well aligned it is to the already adopted State and national level teaching standards. So currently there are 923 educator preparation programs in 41 states as well as the District of Columbia that have adopted edTPA and it provides a standard that we can ensure that all students have access to a teacher who is

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classroom ready on day one of entering the profession.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you for your testimony. The group of students that I named earlier from Connecticut River Academy are you present? Would you like to come up? And that was Kaylyn, Dylan, Ryshad, Shanie, Julie and Carter. Then after the students we will have Steve Hernandez.

RASHAD KING: Good Afternoon Honorable Members. Climate change is one of the biggest issue facing this planet and much of my life I was not allowed to participate in the discussion because I was labeled as being unaware or unknowledgeable on the subject. His affected me deeply. When I applied to become a student member of the State Board of Education, I made it very clear that I advocate for students not to be underestimated by any or all superiors when it comes to education. To underestimate us would be an initial effort to deprive us from gaining knowledge and discouraging any ideas that we may have to help solve climate change.

Education changed this for me. I was able to get educated in a school that prioritized a cosmopolitan view of climate change and insisted upon all student ideas to be shared in an open environment. Who are we to deprive the youth of today, my youth, of a voice, and then demand them to inherit longer summers, shorter winters, rising river levels, and violent weather.

KAYLYN KLESZCZ: Hello, Committee Members, I attend Connecticut River Academy Goodwin University with the rest of my fellow classmates here.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Sorry to interrupt but can you state your name first.

KAYLYN FLESZCZ: Okay. I'm Kaylyn Kleszcz. I come from Wethersfield. And I am here to support HB 5215 an act that would change how we are educated on the topic of climate change.

So at Connecticut River Academy we are taught in a very hands on way, very immersive way about the impacts of climate change and how this affects our future. I used to attend Silas Deane Middle School in Wethersfield, it is a public school. We were not educated on anything revolving around climate change and there is this lack of exposure and this inequality between students and what school you attend. The school right now is magnet school and we have a privilege that many other students in this State do not have. We are future voters of this State. We are future leaders and we need to know how our vote and our voice impacts others. This Bill is necessary. It needs to be passed and I urge you to vote yes on it.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Someone else want to say some words?

CARTER SHELDON: Hello, my name is Carter Sheldon, Good Afternoon. I am a senior at Connecticut River Academy. And we would like to thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony in support of HB 5215 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

This bill is important to us because of the effect that climate change is having on the earth today and what will happen to future generations if the public does not make a change to help the current crisis.

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Currently, climate change education is not required to be included in public schools. This is irrational. The youth of today and future generations will be on the front lines dealing with the consequences of this global crisis. According to an article from NASA, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change "forecasts a temperature rise of 2.5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century". This might not seem like but when thinking about the bigger picture it changes many aspects influenced by regional climates. Some of the many aspects of a region that climate change can impact are a region's agriculture, its animals' habitats, and migrational patterns and their overall culture.

In schools we learn about many current events from all over the world. It is required in line with being a global citizen. Therefore I cannot understand why it would not also be required to learn about a current event that affects the whole world. Without education being provided to every student in schools, future generations will not care or be adequately knowledgeable about climate change. You are, in effect, sending us out into the ocean with no lifejacket. According to NASA, even if we stopped emitting greenhouse gases today, "global warming would continue to happen for at least several more decades, if not centuries". Explicit education about what is happening is a social responsibility. It is your responsibility to see it done. Please vote YES on HB 5215 to mandate climate change education in Connecticut Public Schools. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Anyone else? No. Oh, sorry.

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SHANICE HUTCHINSON: Hello, my name is Shanice Hutchinson. I am also a senior attending Connecticut River Academy.

By teaching climate change in the classrooms, students will be able to learn about the difference between climate change and global warming while being able to take action accordingly. Learning about climate change at my school helps me to contribute to a just and sustainable world because I was made aware about climate change and the long-lasting effects that it can have on our futures if we don't take action. Climate change education has allowed me to see how the environment affects my life daily. By being educated about this issue it has helped me to spread awareness to my community about the diverse impacts that climate change can cause for different groups of people. I strongly call on you to take the initiative to ensure that the Connecticut youth, our future generation, can create an innovative future that promises our children a better tomorrow. Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. So I want to thank you all for coming up here and advocating for climate change. I know that a student previously states that in your Academy they do teach and you're just advocating that so that everyone in the State of Connecticut, every student would get the same, basically what they are teaching at the academy be spread out through the State of Connecticut and I appreciate that. Do we have any questions from Committee Members? Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair and thank you all for being here today and letting us know that you are aware about climate change and

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this is something that we need to make sure everybody is aware of. Of course your generation is going to be impacted much more and the more that we educate people and the more that we hear from students like you the better off everybody will be in this society so thank you so much for your good work and taking the time to be here to talk to this Committee today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Steve Hernandez followed by Dr. Violet Simms.

STEVEN HERNANDEZ: Good Afternoon Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Ranking and other distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Steven Hernández. I am the Executive Director of the Legislature's nonpartisan Commission. I'm joined by Kali Rohrbaugh, who is our LEE Public Policy Fellow. She is a schoolteacher and she will be focusing on a couple of our Bills.

The one I would like to focus on today is really our school literacy Bill. As you know several years ago during Ed reform the work of the CK3LI initiative, the K-3 literacy initiative was really not only the most enduring but the most effective reform that we adopted. It's really one of the remaining reforms. It still has been growing throughout the State of Connecticut. Early literacy is critical to long-term success, it's critical to breaking cycles of poverty and critical to ensuring that people have an opportunity an equitable opportunity to succeed in life. So that is why we are so supportive. We would only recommend for the Center for Reading Research, Literacy Research and Reading Success you amend the Bill slightly to allow for the raising of

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internal philanthropic and other funds which may be made available to the Center through the work of our literacy experts throughout the State. I am now going to turn to Kali, so that Kali can give us a little bit about the Care 4 Kids Bills.

KALI ROHRBAUGH: So I am going to be testifying on both HB 5020 and HB 5222, these are both about Care 4 Kids. So as it stands Connecticut's criteria to enroll for Care 4 Kids is far more restrictive than actually 48 of the states in our Country.

Children experiencing homelessness have long term effects on behavior, employability, relationships and brain development. Research has shown that great financial cost, that if there is a great financial cost to the State when kids are homeless and childhood homelessness is not being addressed. It is estimated that homelessness programs can make nine homeless youths self-sufficient by the age of 20. We can save money that equals the amount of services for 151 homeless youths. So it would actually save us a lot of money in the long run. I know that we had talked about the cost of these programs but I think that with the savings that we make by promoting our homeless children have better access to opportunity. We can definitely afford that.

Further with the expansion to, I'll talk more specifically about the other one, but our time is done. So, testimony is out there.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you and I'm glad always to see you Steve from advocating particularly in regards to early literacy which is so important. And with Care 4 Kids, you know, that's something that's been on the table for the longest time and I

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try to bring that up every year and because we need to open it up more. But of course, the funding is a big issue. Do we have any questions.

Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much. I really appreciate your testimony today Steve Hernandez and I'm sorry, you name again is?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: Kali.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Kali, thank you so much for being here. One of the things I'm very, very concerned about is our homeless youth and I wish that you would continue to discuss some of the options that we might have. First of all when you speak of homeless, are you speaking of homeless youth based on the HUD standard or the Education standard?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: So education standard, the number is very different. When I was looking at the HUD standard I think it is approximately 300 families from the data that I was able to get. When I'm looking at the actual number of students it is about 5,200 students per year experience homelessness. I don't know if that answers your question.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): That certainly, yes. And then when we look at the differences my understanding of the HUD standard is that the people who are counted on the HUD standard is they are actually in a homeless shelter and the ones who are in education standard are, surfers, they don't have an address but they live with some family or friend.

KALI ROHRBAUGH: Yes, yeah.

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REP. JOHNSON (49TH): So that's how that works. And then eventually they may not be able to stay there for any length of time, sometimes people who are in public housing for example and they have limitations on how long a family member who isn't on the lease can stay there?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: Absolutely, yeah.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Are these some of the issues you've been looking at.

KALI ROHRBAUGH: Yes. I mean so when we were doing the research for this I was looking more specifically at the data around how it impacts homeless youth to be homeless.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): What age are you talking about with the youth?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: With youth it was, there were a couple different. So it went all the way up through college but I was mostly focusing on kids that were in the public education system, so K-12.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): And when you look at the impact, are there, have you been able to separate out say the grade point averages of students that are in that under college age through the ones that are in college and compare and contrast. What happens to them, how is learning affected by homelessness?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: So we have a couple of different statistics on that. There was a study that showed that only 24 percent of homeless youth were proficient in math while students who live in deep poverty 42 percent of those students were proficient in math and the general population was at 61 percent

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proficient at math. So we can see that there is a difference between homeless youth and their proficiency and actually students who were living in poverty which was pretty surprising to me. Also we know that young children that experience homelessness are at a higher risk development educationally. Let me find my numbers. Sorry.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): No, take your time please. I think it is important because if we have 5,200 students who are homeless I think that is almost the same size as many of our towns. Some towns only have 600 people in them. So if we have 5,200 there are many, many towns about that size or less towns having less numbers than that. So just think of a whole community of homelessness, of children who are homeless. We're just talking the children, right?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: Yes, children.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Not just, not the parents to?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: Not the parents here.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): When you look at the numbers you add the parents in?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: So the number, when I try to add the parents in the number I got was 300 families total. So it wasn't a specific number with the parents as well but the number of children was 5,200.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): So that's the size of a lot of the communities here in our State. Okay, please continue.

KALI ROHRBAUGH: So the other, some of the other statistics that I found was actually that children who experience homelessness are less likely to be

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employed later on in their life meaning that we are actually losing money because they are not participating in our economy. So that was one of the major statistics that I found. I didn't get any GPA averages or testing averages on a whole but I can certainly send that to you.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): I would like to see that. They are less likely to be employed afterwards now. I know there is a National Organization on Homelessness, when you take a look at their report some of the reports for the National Organization on Homelessness talked about posttraumatic stress disorder. Did your analysis get into the PTSD of the children who are homeless because of the PTSD caused by maybe the circumstances that might have led to the homelessness and the homelessness, those things in combination.

KALI ROHRBAUGH: So I didn't look specifically into students with PTSD that is derived from homelessness. At the Commission we do work very closely with the Social Emotional Learning Collaborative and School Climate Collaborative so we do know the impact that having mental health or emotional issues can have on students success, so certainly that is something that we do want to address. I don't know what the difference is between students from the general population and students who are experiencing homelessness. But again I get that information to you.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): So the Bill that I had passed about four years ago was supposed to make sure that all the school districts, it was passed through the Public Health Committee, all the school districts have a PTSD learning program for teachers and

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administrators in our school systems to make sure that they are in a situation that they understand some of the symptoms of PTSD and how it relates to the homelessness of that particular child. Were you able to go into the situation where homelessness for males from 15 to say 18 age group. A lot of the homeless family shelters don't accept them. Were you able to drill that down and find out what was going on with those young boys.

KALI ROHRBAUGH: No unfortunately that was not in the database that I looked up but I can find that out for you as well.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): That is one of the things that we hear a lot about from the people who run the homeless shelters. Now in terms of being able to house families, were you able to find out any more information about having options for families and maybe some of the causations for the homelessness. Was it income, was it divorce, was it death, an accident, did you get into any of those?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: So for those kinds of things it was more anecdotal than actual data that I found. I did hear some stories from people, there was one story that particularly stuck with me of a woman whose sone was incarcerated and to get him out of jail she actually was unable to pay her rent for two months, was evicted and was unable to get back into another housing situation. So not only was she dealing with her son who was incarcerated, having to pay for those expenses but she was also homeless at the time and so there are some extenuating circumstances, like I said that impact homelessness as well.

STEVE HERNADEZ: We also serve on the Fatherhood Initiative for the State of Connecticut and one of

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the complexities that we found is that fathers with children are often not allowed into homeless shelters with their children because of, you know, because of rules in place at different shelters about men, about grown men being alone, even though they are with their kids. So it's just really complex and one of the members of our Two Generational Initiative had actually lived in his car with his two little girls because he wouldn't be allowed to enter a homeless shelter with them which just doesn't make any sense.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): That's right and so in terms of spaces available, where are the concentrations of homeless families? Do you have any data on where they're located or is this generally in Connecticut period?

KALI ROHRBAUGH: This is generally in Connecticut.

STEVE HERNANDEZ: But we can get you that.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): I'd like to know which communities are doing that. I don't think every community in Connecticut has a homeless shelter. The other question I was just in Appropriations with, discussing with Human Services the situation with respect to temporary assistance for needy families the TANF program, that only lasts for 21 months. So what happens if a family is homeless when their 21 months run out. Does the 21 months end their ability to pay their rent I guess is the question? So if they only have 21 months of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families which was replaced back in the 90s for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and so women and children are living with just 21 months and then they are bounced off the program, they have no income, they

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may have, you know, extenuating circumstances, trying to get a job and trying to find childcare is that a cause of homelessness?

STEVE HERNANDEZ: Well that's the what you're describing is the main outcome for the disconnectedness of our strategies is to breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. And experiencing homeless because you lose assistance, you know, these families don't want to stay on assistance. They actually want to find way in partnership with us to help lift themselves sustainably out of poverty. You know, our families have had to engage in all levels of entrepreneurship just to survive and without help, just a little bit of a hand-up they can actually help break those cycles and live more sustainably.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): So is Connecticut kind of an outlet when it's only 21 months when I understand the Federal Law allows for 60 months?

STEVE HERNANDEZ: Well, you know, in the beginning when these laws first changed, Connecticut was one of the most conservative states. He have an opportunity now in some of the work that we're doing with Two Gen and some of the reevaluation of what the different options for helping lift families out of poverty are, to make those changes, to make it easier for families to succeed.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Have you looked into the fact that a lot of the money that is used now through the Federal Government for TANF isn't really being used to make sure people are housed?

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STEVE HERNANDEZ: We haven't really looked at that issue. But I'm not surprised because one of the things.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): The Block Grant.

STEVE HERNANDEZ: The Block Grants, I'm not surprised because one of the things that we found in our evaluation of what are benefit cliffs are is that we are not strategically thinking about what it is families need as a core need in order to succeed and that is food security, housing security and also workforce training. Those are the three things that can help families succeed.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you, Mr. Hernandez.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): I wasn't finished actually.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Well you have one more question, we have a number of people still here. You got your opportunity to ask your question, but we do have a number of people here and they all want to get their questions in also.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): You don't want to hear about homelessness?

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Just ask your question.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): You can go right ahead, sir. Please proceed.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Dr. Simms, please.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): You are always trying to shut me down.

DR. SIMMS: Good afternoon Representative Sanchez and Senator McCrory and other distinguished members of the Education Committee. Thank you for having me

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here. I am here specifically to support HB 5376 and hopefully eliminate the edTPA requirement for students in teacher training. I am a former public school teacher, administrator and currently a faculty member in a teacher preparation program at the University of Connecticut Storrs. I submitted my testimony but I'll try to sort of hit some of the highlights in the amount of time that I have and you can definitely feel free to ask me any questions.

You know, I hear quality, equity and things like that are sort of buzzwords right now in education but I don't think they mean the same thing to everyone. So for example for me, quality means that a rising teacher should be knowledgeable in their subject areas. They prove this now by taking numerous practice examinations. They should be trained in pedagogical theories and in our teacher preparation programs they accomplish this through the mandatory course work that is aligned with the State Licensing requirements and they should have the opportunities to bridge theory and practice through preservice experiences so that they really ready for the classroom when they graduate. And they do this by participating in internships and student teaching that we supervise and try to give them diverse experiences in.

There are a lot of problems facing our school districts especially our urban districts, yes many teachers are not prepared to teach in them but also they have trouble just filling position, period. Because there are a lot of issues there. I think a lot of this connects to even some of the things we've heard. We just legislated for people to have African-American history in the curriculum in American history now we're advocating, you know, for

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Native American history and things like that. When we have a teacher populous that is over 90 percent white and students are over 40 percent of diverse backgrounds, you're going to have issues with people not being prepared to teach those populations and to point the finger only at teacher preparations programs and say that edTPA is going to solve that is pretty narrow and naïve.

When I was a teacher I remember experiencing teachers when I taught in New Britton for example, someone who was a wonderful teacher in West Hartford who came to our district and couldn't make it, literally quit after one week. That had nothing to do, you know, you can't just standardize sort of the preparation of teachers in that sense.

But it's really concerning and regardless of what any of us think personally about edTPA that there is a lack of peer review research supporting it. This is a fact. Conversely there is sufficiently scholarly concern. Bobby Sanchez spoke about the lecture he attended yesterday [Bell rings] that researcher examined the technical documentation of edTPA and raised serious concerns about the scoring design, the reliability of the assessment and the consequential impact on decisions made after edTPA about candidates. And so I know the time is up, so I will leave that there and answer any questions that you may have. As I said I did submit my full testimony so you would have additional info there.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you, Dr. Simms. Any questions? Representative Bobby [Laughs].

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Dr. Simms for your testimony. So one of the things that they talked touched on last night, there were two students of

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color who basically said this does not work for most students of color. Can you elaborate a little bit about that, you being Latina and you being a former teacher and an administrator can you touch up on that a little bit?

DR. SIMMS: Yes, so there's some pretty scripted things that the students have to do to fulfill their literacy and math edTPA components. And even though it asks for things like how did you differentiate for these students or whatever the focus and the language is just not geared toward, you know, diverse populations. But also when it comes to, I think I gave this example when I spoke recently about bilingual education and some other issues, but as a seminar course teacher while students are going through their student teaching, my curriculum has not narrowed. The University of Connecticut hired me, Black Latina woman with an expertise in multicultural and bilingual education to teach in the teacher preparation program because they know this is a gap for graduates. So that's how you address those gaps. However in my classroom, my most recent lecture on culturally and linguistically relevant teaching I had to cut short by half an hour because somebody had to come in and talk about some of the issues students were having with Test 1 of the edTPA. So at the end of the day, it really is just narrowing the curriculum where I could be doing more to support those preservice teachers and using my expertise to do that.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Can you just explain a little bit about the recording because my understanding that part of this, they have to record themselves or tape themselves while they are in the classroom teaching and what I heard from students was that, or

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course, many of the kids had to blank out their faces on the video and that if a child is not participating in a certain way that reflects on their scores.

DR. SIMMS: Yes.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): So can you explain a little more of that?

DR. SIMMS: So they do have to record themselves and I sort of think of this as a standardized version of Best Portfolio teachers used to have to do in practice that got thrown away some years back in Connecticut because of all the frustrations with that. And so they do have to record themselves. They only have, you know, certain number of opportunities to do that because it is a three to five day lesson plan when they are doing this. And yeah, when you have challenging students and things like that, rather than sort of being able to explain what, you know, what happened with that which happens every day in classrooms, it does make them look bad in the clips that they have to send it. So they do select clips, they don't send in an entire video but they still have to be careful that clip meets, you know, the important parts of the lessons that they said, you know, they're going over in those tapes.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): One quick question. So as an educator myself, if I recall day we had to pass, you know, the see the video, record all that.

DR. SIMMS: I went through that.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): However one of the concerns has been and like was mentioned earlier every school was assessing students differently, every school has

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education, and the reason we had edTPA was one how to uniform assessment for all preservice teachers. If this is not the appropriate, in your opinion, tool to use what do you think would be an appropriate tool to use to assess preservice teachers before they come into the classroom that would incorporate all the things that you talking about, competent, and all literacy and all the great things that an educator would need to be successful in any environment whether it is urban or suburban or rural.

DR. SIMMS: I don't think a premade or standardized tool can do that because it doesn't matter if New York, New Mexico whoever are using something, Connecticut is Connecticut and we have our own population with our own issues and just like we don't teach a single way, teachers or supposed to monitor and adjust that is what we should be doing as well in teaching our teachers and evaluating our future teachers. And so I think it would definitely be much more meaningful for people in the State to come together to create something together that comes from us not from, you know, necessarily one standardized things. And I know that is what one of the concerns from the Department of Ed was the July deadline which I mean, I think that definitely can be an issue of institutions providing an alternative assessment and the State not having the capacity to actually review those in depth and I think that is a problem. But that doesn't mean that edTPA is still a good thing to do. I think looking at a different deadline possibly or another way to do that. But I think that we also, just like I said before, we have to know that this is not a single issue, you know,

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this problem is exasperated by many issues that are not just the teacher preparation program.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

DR. SIMMS: Thank you all very much.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Up next we will have a student Sena Wazer and we also have another student from Sunrise Movement, where is she, Sunrise Movement, Mitchel Kvedar. What to come up together? Come on up Michael. It's Mitchel, I'm sorry.

SENA WAZER: Good Afternoon. Thank you so much for allowing me to testify before you today. My name Sena Wazer. I am a 16-year-old climate activist and a collage sophomore at the University of Connecticut. I am the co-director of Sunrise CT and today I am here because I am gravely concerned about my future, and the ability of my generation to be informed on climate science.

In January of 2020, Sunrise CT put out a survey asking students if they had been or were being taught about climate change. Out of the approximately 200 students that responded, 29 percent of those students said they were not being taught about climate change. Even more concerning was that of all students, including those who were being taught about climate, 58 percent said "that they did not feel that they had enough information to make informed decisions on the topic." These statistics clearly show that Connecticut students, are not being taught enough about climate change and the effects that it will have on our lives, or how to work towards a safer cleaner future.

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And I want to be very clear about something right now. As young people, climate change will affect every single part of our lives moving forward. We will have to deal with the consequences of your choices and lack of direct and immediate action to educate the masses on climate science. The least that we deserve, is to be taught about what is happening to our future.

Knowledge is power, and so I am asking that you empower our youth, our students. I am asking that you ensure, that no matter what district a child lives in, they have equal access to the information about climate and energy science. This information is critical to their future on planet earth. It is your responsibility to ensure they have the facts and the science because climate change is not an opinion, it is a fact. There is a scientific consensus, that the climate is changing, and that we can help. And so I am asking you to make sure that every child knows about that consensus, that we are not left in the dark, about something that will be so influential in the rest of our lives. And so I implore you to ensure equal access to climate science education that is contextualized and empowering for our students [Bell rings]here in Connecticut. Thank you.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you. And thank you for your testimony. [Applause]. Mitchel come on up.

MITCHEL KVEDAR: Thank you. Good Afternoon. Dear Honorable Co-Chairs Sen. Douglas McCrory, Rep. Robert Sanchez, and other Members of this body. My name is Mitchel Kvedar, I am the Co-Director of the Sunrise Movement here in State of Connecticut, the

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Communications Director of the College Democrats for the State of Connecticut and most importantly a student here in the State of Connecticut. At Eastern Connecticut State University I am studying political science and environmental studies, a pretty good mix to be here before you today. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity.

Now, climate change is the greatest existential threat to humankind. I shouldn't have to be sitting here, having to worry about the climate crisis, how it will affect me, my it will affect my children and how it will affect my children's children. I consider myself lucky though. I am lucky that I have been able to understand the threat that we face, that I know the facts, and exactly where we and what humanity is up against. I think of all the children, in this great State of Connecticut and I think they should be afforded and allowed to know the facts. Myself, as well as the majority of the youth, believe that we have a human right, to know what is happening to our planet we all call home and what will happen in the near future. Connecticut can lead on this issue, especially right here in education, in which we pride our ourselves here in this Nutmeg State so much in, and rightly should. If we educate our students, they will go on to be the people who create innovative solutions, people that effectively apply climate change in the business world, and in public policy. We are training our children for the world they will inhabit.

Again. I have been lucky to have been exposed to what is occurring, have learned the facts and found my passion in public policy and climate change. This is a step in the right direction, [Bell rings] and I implore all of you to support House Bill 5215

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because this is more important than anything else.
Thank you very much

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you, Mitchel. Any questions from the Committee? Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I just want to say thank you so much for being here and all the work that you are doing with your group, you're doing great work and I see you all over Connecticut. Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Representative Gilchrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Through you, Mr. Chair and I want to echo my colleague's comments and just thank you for the good work and for your advocacy.

MITCHELL KVEDAR: Thank you, Representative.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I'll just add my voice, done a great job by you and the other young woman prior to you. Thank you so much for coming up and testifying.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Seeing none more, thank you Mitchel. Next we have Representative Simmons. Is Representative Simmons here? No. Okay. We have Michael Alfano.

MICHAEL ALFANO: Senator McCrory, Members of the Education Committee, Good Afternoon, my name is Michael Alfano. I am the Dean of Education at Sacred Heart University. More germane to today, I was the Chair of the edTPA working group that this body

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established. I offer this testimony in direct opposition in Raised Bill 5376.

The edTPA working group did not recommend ceasing statewide implementation of edTPA. Indeed Raised Bill 5376 is significantly problematic for the following three reasons:

First, National Accreditation Standards which are required for approval in Connecticut, require that all educator preparation programs are utilized statistically valid and reliable assessments. Though a New Jersey based psychometrician maps, Representative Sanchez had recently observed has previous ties with Pearson Education's direct competitor for decades has been gaining national notoriety by taking issue with the reliability of the edTPA. There are other numerous psychometricians who have deemed it valid and reliable, more importantly our national accreditor has deemed it reliable and valid. As noted through the edTPA process, Connecticut education preparation programs, also echoed today by Commissioner Cardona, neither the State Department of Education or Connecticut' teacher preparation programs have the financial and human resources to develop their own valid and reliable performance assessment.

Many of the Connecticut teacher preparation will continue to use the edTPA including Sacred Heart University regardless if this Bill or not for accreditation reasons among others. So in essence this essentially makes this Raised Bill moot.

Second point, as Chair of the edTPA Working Group it was clear to me and the majority of the working group members that most vocal opponents of edTPA more often than not were those higher education

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faculty that have completed little to no edTPA training, have little to no actual classroom experience and either cherry pick from specific types of research or disseminate their own factually inaccurate information regarding the edTPA that aligns with their own personal agendas all the while interacting with teacher candidates. So given this lack of actual expertise regarding edTPA implementation is it any wonder why some teacher candidates who work with a small but local group of higher education faculty struggle to complete the edTPA or more germane to this actually fail to perceive its relevance to their own teaching practice. edTPA implementation is in it's infancy in Connecticut. To stop it's statewide implementation now would be a disservice to Connecticut's superintendents who have submitted testimony, by the way, and not supporting this Bill {Bell rings] and also a disservice to families [Bill rings] who expect teachers entering the profession learner ready day one.

I have additional testimony I will submit regarding the financial implications as well but I am happy to answer questions.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): So I have a question, or anyone else. Any questions. Thank you for your testimony by the way. Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and thank you for being here and for your testimony and for your work on the leading up the working group. So I do have the report and I have been going through it and take it very seriously and I just wondered two quick things. You mention that some of this was driven by some of the teachers that

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may have lacked the experience with it, could you just elaborate a little bit more on how you would have determined that.

MICHAEL ALFANO: Sure, absolutely.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): And then secondly in your report you mention something about the impact it could have on World Languages and if you could just touch on that.

MICHAEL ALFANO: Certainly. So last year there were whitepapers that were circulated by members of faculty at the three institutions that Representative Sanchez had mentioned. Those presented factually inaccurate information, demonstrably factually inaccurate information that in fact members of the Connecticut State Department of Education actually confronted the authorship on but there was no subsequent retraction of those documents. So I can provide additional information specifics on those whitepapers but much of that whitepaper narrative actually fueled the formation of the edTPA working group.

Secondly there is no evidence to suggest, and in answer to your second question actually makes my point. So in one of the whitepapers there was a contention that people coming out of the World Languages had to submit their edTPA in English. That is in fact factually inaccurate and so everything that follows around being culturally biased, etc. was erroneous information. So that document was also filled with other factual inaccuracies that again colleagues at CFDA pointed out to the authorship was not neither addressed or retracted and continued to be built upon as we've going through this working group experience.

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REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you for that explanation. Very much appreciate it, thank you.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Well, I'd just add that clearly there are strong opinions on both side of this argument and I'll take it back to my experience. I had to take an assessment in order to become an educator, clearly I don't know what's the right answer is but I do understand and realize that Connecticut is very unique and although these assessments are being used all over the country in other states, there is a sense of uniqueness here and I don't know what is the right tool to use. I do think that we need a uniformed tool and like the other professor said, I would love to see us come together and create our own tool for our educators in Connecticut. And I don't know if that can be done through your working group, cause you have a strong opinion that this is the way to go. And I can probably go find other people who have a strong opinion that we should go another way. I think all those strong opinions should get in a room and come up with a tool, if not, because I honestly believe the best way you can determine if someone can teach is evaluate them as an administrator and give 'em an opportunity. But with that said, I appreciate your testimony and we'll continue to figure this out as we move forward.

MICHAEL ALFANO: Can I make one final, response.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Yes, you may, not a problem.

MICHAEL ALFANO: So I sat on edTPA. And edTPA looked at Connecticut developing its own tool and the significant amount of time and financial resources to do that is seven digits plus in multiple years.

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Second point is that Massachusetts in fact developed their own tool and it's essentially the edTPA. So I leave you with those two thoughts.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Well, I'll tell you this, education is so important to me and so important to the growth of this State I think we need to make that an investment. Thank you. Next up Bridgett Vossler and Bridget you can come with. I think you have Bridget from Trinity, no? Come on you trendy students. Come on Peace. Bridget and Peace.

PEACE KABARI: Good Afternoon distinguished Members of the Education Committee and thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 5215.

My name is Peace Kabari and I am an economics major and a religious studies minor at Trinity College. And I sit here before you today as a former political refugee from Rivers State, Nigeria and this is because we were pushed off our land due to oil but we were saved due to environmental protection and activists in Ogoni.

So the reason why I talk about this is because environmental protection is very important to me, myself and our Trinity College community and we found that climate environmental protection is not mandatory within Connecticut and we think that is super important. We've already heard plenty of testimony here today talking about that subject so I will not use up more of your time.

But fast forward to my senior year of college, last semester I took a class called *Religion in Climate Change* with my colleague here, Eric and we explored how various religions interacted with the earth and whether it was coexistence or domination. And

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unfortunately here in the U.S. much of the United States is taken the step of being, dominating their environment and we would like to change that and we really think that education our youth coming up is the best way to do that. So it is our duty to educate our students so that future generations are more prepared to navigate the world that we are headed into. And then my hope is that Connecticut will be a leader in this fight.

BRIGETTE VOSSLER: My name is Brigitte Vossler and I am a senior at Trinity College. So, I acquired my passion for the environment at a young age and I now study environmental policy at Trinity.

Young people are at the cutting edge of climate activism and as a result is widely assumed that my generation is deeply knowledgeable about environmental issues generally and climate change in particular. But that is not the case. I find it disturbing how many of my peers are unaware of both the fundamentals of climate science that the severity of the issue.

A more serious understanding of the climate change issue is vital for citizenry that in the coming years will have to decide on a wide range of policies to address the most serious crisis humanity has ever faced. That is why I believe it is absolutely essential to include climate change in the curriculum of public schools in Connecticut.

It is not wise to let youth rely on the vagrancies of social media or family interests to learn about this. Climate change is a political issue however it will irresponsible to continue this rhetoric in the future as it is not a belief system. As the United Nations reports it has to be we humans that

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are destroying the life support systems of this planet and an alarming rate. The youth must understand that climate science is indisputable. Inclusion of climate change in school curriculum is not being utilized to advance a part of an agenda but rather it is to educate and equip the rising generation.

As any other student in the United States, I have taken physics, geometry and history courses in school, yet students remain ignorant to the current issue we are facing. Including climate change in public school curriculum will form sustainable habits and behaviors in the future. In the United States, it is especially important for the youth to have awareness of their impact of their lifestyles. Enormous damage has been done to our planet to meet the ever-increasing demands of a rapidly growing globalized consumer culture. We are now gearing up to inflict even greater damage as we prepare to harvest all remaining natural resources. The window for mitigating the impact [Bell rings] of climatic change will soon close. Education will equip future generations with the knowledge they will need to address the climate crisis as citizens. Thank you.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you. And thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Representative Gilchrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not a question, just again thank you it's really great to hear from young people about the importance and I will tell a funny little story. This week I'll own, I get very cold and so I said to my kids, my birthday is coming up and I said, "Hey you might want to get me one of those automatic starters for

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the car so I can turn on the car to war it up" and my son's a fifth grader and he said, "You know that's really bad for the environment" and he started teaching me about the environment so, it just kind of hits home the importance of our kids can learn this in school how it will last a lifetime. Thank you.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Representative McCarthy.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I do just wanted to welcome you and thank you for your testimony. It is very important and my niece goes to Trinity, she would be upset if I didn't say, Hello! So thank you.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you for your testimony young ladies. Representative Lanoue. Representative Lanoue, not here. Okay, Mel Horton from Sacred Heart.

MEL HORTON: Good Afternoon, my name is Mel Horton, Associate Dean at Sacred Heart University and a former faculty member who's been involved with edTPA for over seven years. I offer this testimony in direct opposition to Raised Bill 5376 concerning implementation of edTPA.

Recently in my role at Sacred Heart as edTPA coordinator and the certification officer, I met with a candidate in elementary education who did not pass edTPA. The elementary handbook requires candidates to teach a mini-unit of 3 to 5 lessons which focuses on teaching students to use strategies to read or write text. Upon reviewing her artifacts and meeting with her to debrief, it was apparent that she did not understand how to support her elementary students to use a strategy to read or

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write text. Without the evidence from this performance-based assessment, which by the way is scored externally by trained scorers who are elementary educators and teacher educators, our educator preparation program would not have known that this candidate was not ready yet to take over a classroom. Because, you see, this candidate has a 3.8 GPA at Sacred Heart. This candidate received an A in student teaching and she received the highest scores possible on our student teaching evaluation. She has passed Praxis II and Foundations of Reading. So, without edTPA evidence, I would have signed off on her paperwork for certification without knowing that she was not yet ready to take over a classroom.

The point I am trying to make is that edTPA is not the problem...the problem is educator preparation programs that are not able to provide valid and reliable evidence that our completers are ready to teach when they leave our programs. edTPA shines a spotlight on this problem. Is edTPA perfect? Of course not! But instead of throwing out the baby with the bathwater let's work together to improve edTPA and utilize [Bell rings] edTPA evidence to help preparation programs. I urge you to withdraw Raised Bill No. 5376, AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDTPA AS PART OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS. Thank you.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Yes, Representative McCarty then I have a question.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the last part of your testimony and have you submitted aside from the report from the working

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group any of the recommendations that you would see may improve the edTPA assessment?

MEL HORTON: Yes, ma'am I was part of the working group so a lot of those recommendations are there. Connecticut held over 15 trainings for faculty during the pilot years and they were sparsely attended by faculty and we need to do more with implementation, I think everybody thought it was just gonna go away and they are not prepared for it.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): And you brought out this case of the student that has a 3.8 GPA and the other evaluation, what percentage of your teachers, your initial teachers would you say are not able to pass the test?

MEL HORTON: The fall of 2019 was the first year for consequential scoring so we only had 30 candidates submit. We had two who did not pass. My candidates of color are doing just as well as my candidates who are white. We had a year in Connecticut of implementation but no cut-score was required. Once the cut-score went into place we saw our scores jump by about three to four points because they knew that they didn't have to try hard.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Okay, thank you.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): So, let me just ask two questions. Do you believe if a student does not pass edTPA assessment that that student should not be in the classroom?

MEL HORTON: I do because the edTPA was built on the Board of National Board teaching standards and it's measuring the effective cycle of teaching which is planning, assessing and instructing and if anyone who is against it would look at the handbook and

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what it is measuring they would agree that it is what good teaching is. What most people don't like is they think it is high stakes and it's for profit and that's their biggest beef about it. But's its already had validity and reliability established from years of pilot testing, we have thousands of scores to go on so it's not the assessment that is the problem, it's the implementation in our preparation programs who aren't preparing candidates to be ready.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): So that's good. That leads to my second question cause I heard you say that the problem isn't the assessment the problem is the teacher preparation program which that is you.

MEL HORTON: Exactly.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): So what are you gonna do?

MEL HORTON: So edTPA, well what we're doing now, I've been at Sacred Heart for one year, we're working to backward map some of the constructs measured into our courses to give candidates more experience. One of the biggest problems is they don't have experience working with real children before student teaching, so we throw them into student teaching which is already what only ten weeks required by the State of Connecticut, it's not enough time for them to get to know students and to practice. So it's a problem of practice, not a problem with the assessment. And before edTPA we were ready to go on our merry way because we had no valid and reliable assessment to tell us otherwise.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): So, last question. Do you believe there's some things in your teaching department, not just yours at Sacred Heart, but

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preparation programs in general that we to eliminate and do things that we need to add to our teaching prep program for 21st century student?

MEL HORTON: Absolutely.

SENATOR MC CRORY (2ND): Great, I'm glad you said that. You can stop right there [Laughter]. Thank you. Thank you, thank you. Representative Haddad. Is this a combo? I get two for one here? All right, cool, no problem. [Laughter].

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Good Afternoon Representative Sanchez and Senator McCrory and other members of the Education Committee. My name is Representative Greg Haddad and I represent the Town of Mansfield and I am here today to yield my time and introduce Bronwyn Mott who is a resident of Storrs and a seventh grader at Mansfield Middle School. She has written an essay for one of her classes and asked if she could share it with you today on House Bill 5217. I've got to tell you, I run an essay contest every year. We are so proud in Mansfield of the quality of education of our students at our middle school and I'm sure that you will enjoy and benefit from hearing her perspective on this important issue.

BRONWYN MOTT: Hello, my name is Bronwyn Mott, and I am Mansfield Middle School seventh grader. A student who went to Edwin Oscar Smith High School in Mansfield, Connecticut, would often stay up past midnight doing homework for classes. This high school starts at 7:25 a.m., so this student usually only slept for five or six hours. This is much less sleep than what the CDC recommends for teenagers. If the State of Connecticut pushed back the start time for all high schools, then all students would have the benefit of more sleep. A National Sleep

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Foundation poll indicated that "Forty-five percent of adolescents in the United States said they slept for an insufficient length of time on school nights and 19 percent of students said they fell asleep in school at least once a week." High schoolers do not get the amount of sleep needed to perform their best in school. School starts too early, and students are too sleepy to participate.

Based on research, school start times should be pushed back to after 8:30 a.m. Students who get the sleep they need can be their best every day, and enough sleep in teens will lead them to make better decisions. Well some critics say that students can go to bed earlier. In reality, they stay up late because they are not sleepy until later at night due to puberty. Once children reach puberty, their biological clock changes. "They fall asleep later than older adults and young kids," said senior author Horatio de la Iglesia of the University of Washington researcher and professor of biology. Sarah McKibben, author of the article *Wake-up Call*, which was featured in the *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Education Update*, and also adopted by *Start School Later: Healthy Hours* says, "75.4 percent of high school students get fewer than 8 hours of sleep." The average amount of sleep a teenager receives a night is 7.25 hours. There can also be different effects based on gender. For example, "What was most surprising is the fact that teenage girls reported a higher degree of interference of daytime sleepiness than teenage boys on multiple aspects of their school and personal activities," said co-author Pascale Gaudreault who is completing her doctoral

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degree in clinical neuropsychology at the Universite du Quebec.

High school students need more sleep because their ability to pay attention decreases with lack of sleep. This affects the brain's capability to function properly. Unfortunately, some of the long-term effects of lack of sleep are hypertension, heart attack, and stroke, weight gain and obesity, diabetes, depression and anxiety, faulty brain function, memory loss, immune system deficiency, and psychiatric disorders, according to Dr. Carl Rosenberg who specializes in sleep medicine and neurology and is also certified by the American Board of Sleep Disorders, Medicine and the American Board of Psychology and Neurology. Furthermore, 20 to 30 percent of high schoolers and six percent of middle schoolers fall asleep during the day. Falling asleep in school can be avoided with a later start time that would allow students to obtain the amount of sleep the human body needs. With a later start time, focus in students will increase, and older teens will be more alert when driving. This could lead to fewer car crashes and fatalities. An "estimated 27 percent of drowsy driving car crashes involve 16 to 19-year-olds." Furthermore, schools can see improvements in their attendance rates because students who sleep more will be less likely to be late or absent from school.

Additionally, the impact of a full night's sleep extends beyond the classroom. Sleep has an effect on life decisions. According to the CDC, "effects of not enough sleep are being overweight, no daily physical activity, symptoms of depression, unhealthy behaviors, poor performance in school." The American Academy of Pediatrics says, "Poor sleep is

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linked to increased reliance on caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol." It is clear the effects of these products can be negative, but students of this age should not have to rely on these products due to sleep deprivation. This can be avoided if more sleep is gained and students do not have to worry about going to school so early.

In 2014, the American Academy of Pediatrics issues a policy statement calling on school districts to move start times to 8:30 a.m. or later for middle and high schools so that students can get at least eight-and-a-half hours of sleep a night. Research proves that starting school after 8:30 a.m. will result in fewer students falling asleep and better academic results. In 2016, Dobbs Ferry School District in Westchester County, New York, pushed back their start times for both middle and high schools. This was done to combat sleep deprivation and to increase students' focus in school. Pushing back their start time also led to students being able to have time to eat breakfast.

Another successful example is St. George's School in Middletown, Rhode Island. After starting a trial that delayed the school start time by thirty minutes, "The portion of students reporting at least eight hours of sleep on school nights jumped from about 16 percent to almost 55 percent. Reports of daytime sleepiness dropped substantially from 49 percent to 28 percent. First period tardiness dropped by almost half, and students reported having more time to eat a hot, more nutritious breakfast." Because of the results that were shown, the school made the permanent change. With the information that has been presented, it is best for students to start later. A later start time would result in

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students being more alert, making better choices, being healthier, and having better attendance and academic performance. Helping students be successful in their lives is a goal that school districts have. What can help with their success? A later start time, despite arguments against a time change such as costs. I appreciate testifying against you today. Thank you. [Laughter]

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): She's not testifying against us, trust me. Listen, now you know you went overtime, but you are a seventh grader and to come up here and speak, I was going to just let you go. I was going to get on them later, but you ain't got no problems. I'm proud of you. You're a great role model. I appreciate it. Any questions or comments? Representative Gilchrest.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I echo the remarks -- Wow, for a seventh grader. Thank you. What this also really helps is the whole point of having this bill is because we know that communities across the state are having this conversation kind of over and over again, and so to be able to have it at a statewide level is so important. And we know that communities down in Fairfield County have changed times, and my community of West Hartford has been discussing it, but it's so helpful to know that it certainly is being discussed all across the state. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I, too, would like to welcome you and just tell you how very impressed I was with your essay. It would compete with doctoral research, so I'm hoping that you will submit your essay to the

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Working Group as it's established. So, thank you very much, and congratulations to you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Next, up, Fletcher Seymour.

FLETCHER SEYMOUR: Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Education Committee.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Excuse me. You can you turn that one on or use that mike, either one.

FLETCHER SEYMOUR: Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Education Committee, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk today. It is the job of schools to equip children with the knowledge and skills that they will need to navigate our world with confidence. While the next generation's science standards, those adopted by Connecticut, mention we need to understand global climate systems. Schools are not compelled to give climate change the attention that it deserves and the attention that is truly needed to give students an understanding of the significance of climate change.

Given how consequential climate change will be in the lives of the next generation and the generations after that, it is imperative that every young person today be given an in-depth understanding of climate change. This means familiarity with the relevant literature, the projected economic, social, geopolitical, health, and ecological impacts as well as current and future efforts at mitigation and adaptation.

Not all students have the self-motivation, time, or resources to learn about climate change on their own. This is why we need to be teaching it in the

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classroom. Climate change will be a defining issue in the coming age. It's a phenomenon that threatens the habitability of our planet, and it affects every aspect of human life from agriculture to industry to trade to international relations; so are, therefore, justified in giving it more attention in the classroom.

Also, the study of climate change and the complex and multilayered global problem that it is offers invaluable educational opportunities. Learning about and truly understanding climate change requires an application of a variety of skills, from analyzing and making sense of data to understanding human beings and society, to distinguishing rational argumentation from fallacious rhetoric. If public schools teach climate change, students will see all their skills come together to assist in the understanding of a single topic. And I can promise this is among the most exciting and empowering things to see happen as a student. It will bolster students' confidence in their ability to understand and affect the world positively.

Also, understanding climate change, however dire the facts, is an important step in counteracting apathy. Thank you for giving me the chance to testify today.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): You could have concluded. Were you here at the beginning of the meeting? I said when you hear that bell, you should final and in conclusion, go to that last sentence.

FLETCHER SEYMOUR: If Connecticut plays a role in providing students with an understanding of climate change, we increase the nation's and world's collective understanding of the issue, bringing us closer to addressing it. Connecticut has a

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reputation as a national leader in education, and if we take the initiative and provide our students with climate change education, then we will be setting a precedent for other states. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any questions? No comment? Robert Goodrich, Robert Goodrich? Jeff Leake.

JEFF LEAKE: Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty, and Senator Berthel and members of the Education Committee. My name is Jeff Leake. I serve as President of the Connecticut Education Association and as a teacher in Cheshire. CEA generally supports the concept raised in S.B. 173. We believe it is time for Connecticut to revisit what it determines as important for schools to focus on to provide high quality public education.

Connecticut should take this opportunity to revisit how it measures what it expects students to be able to learn and do. It should use this opportunity through ESSA to increase equity by embracing all skills and subjects where students can excel and show success rather than alienate students who do not necessarily shine on standardized math or language tests.

A renewed version of this would enable the state to better focus on issues of school climate, the promotion of social and emotional skills, and executive function. ESSA flexibility would also permit states to better promote students' ability to think critically, show creativity, practice collaboration, and build stronger communication skills, all of which are necessary to succeed later in life.

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Additionally, we suggest that the assessment framework proposed in S.B. 173, more specifically include these important outcomes of public education -- those beyond academic achievement measured in the snapshots in time that are standardized tests. Many crucial factors that contribute to a student's academic success should also be required. These would include social-emotional well-being, attendance rates, and other indicators of student engagements and the positive effect not only of teachers but of school and district leaders, as well, in promoting positive culturally competent school climates. We thank you for moving forward with 173 and, again, invite these additional thoughts. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank for your testimony. Any questions? Seeing none, super. Oh, Monica, Monica Cavender from Quinnipiac.

MONICA CAVENDER: Good afternoon. I'm Dr. Monica Cavender, and I'm a full time professor at Quinnipiac University, and I've been an educator for over 30 years. As a representative of the School of Education at Quinnipiac University, I am recommending that Connecticut continue to support the implementation of the edTPA portfolio assessment for teacher candidates.

I have been the edTPA coordinator at Quinnipiac since 2015 as well as a national and local scorer of dozens of edTPA portfolios. Although edTPA may be described as rigorous, saying it is rigorous is a compliment to the profession. Being a classroom teacher requires a great deal of rigorous thought. The planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection required of each component is complex.

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As professional educators, we know that rarely are two days the same. We know that being an effective teacher requires thoughtful planning for diverse needs. We know that engaging students in the implementation of every lesson is critical for learning to take place. We know that formative and summative assessments need to be professionally crafted to reflect how students can show that they have learned. We know ongoing reflective thought that happens throughout a lesson is part of being an effective teacher.

All of this rigorous, complex, hard, and incredibly rewarding requiring teacher candidates to provide evidence that they know the research-based practice and rigorous thought that goes into teaching prior to being certified is only fair to the candidate and to the profession. Sending candidates out to teach without that expectation is not fair to the candidate or their future students. I would not want a teacher candidate that scored below the cut score teaching my own children or yours. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any questions? Thank you.
Hugh Birdsall.

HUGH BIRDSALL: Good afternoon. Thanks for having me. I want to ask your forgiveness before I start if any of my frustration comes out in my testimony. I teach climate change to elementary school and middle school students. I've been doing it for about five years. The places where I go don't have it. That's why they call me, and I work for an organization called Reforest the Tropics. I'm their educational consultant, and I go in and I teach seven lessons about climate change. They're interactive, they're interdisciplinary.

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Climate change education is not one thing. It's not like you have a climate education course. That would be great, but climate change touches on everything, every content area. So, if you're studying soil without studying regenerative agriculture, that's a problem. If you're studying water without studying ocean acidification and the accelerated water cycle, that's a problem. I could go on and on. With one little shift in each content area, you could teach climate change really well.

We set the bar so low that schools can say, "Oh, we're teaching climate change. We teach about weather." To me, that's nuts. It's not that there's a lack of materials; there's a glut of materials. The DEEP has a binder this thick of climate change lesson plans. Teachers don't have time to sort it out. And, in conclusion, I'd like you to tell me what your understanding of climate change is. If you could hold up this if you know nothing about it, a little bit more, a little bit more, a little bit more, a little bit more; more than me, and I've been studying this for 17 years. Could you just show the group where you stand on your understanding, what your understanding of climate change is? This is what I ask my students every time I meet them for the first time; so, I'm asking you. And I saw someone hold up three fingers. Those of you who are not holding up fingers, that speaks volumes, as well. So, thanks so much for the time.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Go ahead, young man>

NOAH CARVER: Hello, my name is Noah Carver. I am a senior at Montville High School. I was fortunate enough to be invited by Mr. Birdsall to come in and

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speaking today, and I appreciate that opportunity greatly. I'm sure it's not lost on you how major a disaster this could be for the United States. This could be the ultimate disaster where there is no United States anymore along with any other country. It is astronomical in size. When I took my AP Environmental class this year, it's depressingly large.

It is impossible for me to wrap my mind around the scale that climate change has enveloped the modern world. The amount of change that needs to happen in our daily living is immense and very difficult to grasp if you haven't been wrestling with it for years. And as these great changes come to Connecticut, I think it is more than important that we have as much of the population aware of what is happening so we can tackle this problem together and become a global leader; well, if not global, then at least in America, lead the charge in fighting this great disaster that is nearing every single day. That's it. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for the testimony, both of you guys. Oh, sorry, got a question.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): It's more a comment. You said you were both from Montville.

JEFF BIRDSALL: No, I actually live in Clinton, Connecticut. But I've taught in Montville; in fact, I've worked with Noah's class.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay, that's great. And, so, if I just may ask you because we're trying to look throughout our schools throughout Connecticut to see what is exactly going on, and it's our understanding

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that most of the districts are meeting the standards.

JEFF BIRDSALL: And it's a very low standard.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay. So, that's what I'm trying to get at. So, pretty much your testimony is looking to say that you don't think it's adequate following the next generation standards that --

JEFF BIRDSALL: Completely inadequate, yes.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay, and I think I heard you say that you think that you could possibly in other subject, perhaps, areas.

JEFF BIRDSALL: Not perhaps. It's the reality. Climate change touches everything, literally.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): So, that are you advocating? That climate change would be a part of --

JEFF BIRDSALL: Language arts, yes. They need to know words like anthropogenic and biogeochemical and forcings and feedbacks. They need to know what those things mean and what they mean to them. Math - they need to be able to calculate a carbon inventory for their school and for their home. Social studies - they need to know about forced migrations that's been brought on by climate change, drought, famine, flood, civil war, crop failure, wildfires. They need to know all that, and that happens in every single content area.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay, and what was the name of -- you started by mentioning the name of the --

JEFF BIRDSALL: I work for a nonprofit -- is that what you mean? Reforest the Tropics based in Mystic, Connecticut. Our job is to plant carbon-

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offset forests in the tropics to offset carbon emissions here in the United States.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Well, I'm a very large supporter of Millstone Nuclear Power Plant, and I know they're doing a great job with their carbon-free energy; so, --

JEFF BIRDSALL: Yeah, they have their own set of problems, though, don't they?

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Well, not to me. And I'd also like to recognize the student from Montville High School, and thank you for coming up here to give your testimony today, and thank you for your passion.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Next up, Joan Nicoll-Senft from Central and followed by, so you can be prepared, followed by Fie Budzinsky.

JOAN NICOLL-SENFT: Good afternoon. Thank you, Commission, for having this and hearing my testimony today. I am here to oppose Bill 5376. I'm Joan Nicoll-Senft, and I'm a Professor and Program Coordinator of Special Education at Central Connecticut State University. My comments here are on behalf of my department.

This is my fourth year supporting candidates in the edTPA because we participated in the pilot, and I've been doing it with over 100 educators to this point. I'm also a nationally trained scorer, not because I'm a fan of Pearson or standardized testing but because I wanted to really understand what Connecticut was getting into when it was making its initial decision-making around edTPA.

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So, over the past four years, my department has found edTPA to be well aligned with the complex tasks of teaching and a strong measure of a teacher candidate's ability to be "learner ready day one." It sets the bar high. We believe it should to ensure that Connecticut's educators are well prepared to teach when they exit their teacher prep programs. Additionally, the edTPA is educative. It's helped me hone my skills as a teacher educator, and university supervisor. It's helped my department to use data to inform course and program revisions, to improve our student's teaching. It's helped us to facilitate a common language in collaboration and shared practices across teacher programs at Central Connecticut State University, and it helps our teacher candidates by providing actionable feedback on a continuum of teaching proficiency.

From a special education perspective, it's the first performance-based test that I've seen in my over-30 years in the field that holds general educators accountable for including and teaching students with disability in general education environments.

However, clearly not everyone else sees edTPA as we do. I've come to view edTPA as a disrupter. Disrupters bring about change by disrupting the status quo. I'll just end with a quote from Marvin Lynn who's a noted scholar of race and education, and he said, "We convey the information about the student populations teachers work with in teacher preparation programs, but what we don't do is makes sure that that translates into the skills that are necessary to teach these populations," and that's what edTPA does. Thank you.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony, and we have a question from Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm just very curious. You know we're always looking with our students how do we measure success. So, I'm just curious. Is there ever any follow-up with these students after they complete the preparation programs with the University, and if you could just quickly speak to that?

JOAN NICOLL-SENFTE: I can. I actually have a quote from one of our recent grads, if you want me to read it.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Do you want to summarize it?

JOAN NICOLL-SENFTE: Sure. Basically, so she is a recent grad, did edTPA, and I asked her to give some comments. She said that it helped her to reflect not just on the way she teaches but also on the decisions that she makes as an educator. Each portion of the reflections allowed her to see the direct relationship between the decisions that she made as an educator and how those decisions resulted in student learning. Let me tell you, she was not happy when she was doing the edTPA. This is after the fact. No one is happy when they're doing a performance-based assessment. I have 30 of them right now in my care, and none of them would be happy about this. But this is a reflection after. Once she saw what it did to help her prepare, she was much more in a frame of mind to have this. If you ask anyone in the midst of taking the National Bar or any exam for any professional, they're not going to be happy while they're doing it.

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REP. MCCARTY (38TH): If I may, I appreciate that very much, and thank you for reading, but was that voluntary, or was there some -- do you have a method to get back --

JOAN NICOLL-SENFT: Oh, oh, we actually do. We have a social media group that's private for our students, so we maintain contact with them in that regard. We do have them do a professional growth plan that helps them to sort of understand and make meaning of what the edTPA meant for them so that it's more meaningful for them as they enter the profession.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): If I may, just very, very quickly. So, but when we put the working group together, we did not have any student participation at that level, did we?

JOAN NICOLL-SENFT: I don't know. I wasn't asked. I could have certainly found you candidates, but I didn't know that you were looking for them.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you again. I believe it's Fie Budzinsky. Come on out, come on up, c'mon. C'mon down.

FIE BUDZINSKY: Oh, I'm ready. It's been five hours, and it's actually been a privilege to be here because I've learned a lot. I've been here for honors but not for sharing and giving back directly. My name is Fie Budzinsky, and this is my niece, Joelle Budzinsky. She was going to testify, but she won't. She's here together with me. She's the reason I'm here. She contacted me from CTRA. All of our CTRA students have had to leave, and I'm sad,

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but I'm here to share with you. But first to thank Fletcher and to thank Representative Palm and to thank other people that have testified here, and the patience here of all of you is extraordinary, and I'm really grateful.

I've taught in the business for 48 years. She's a rookie, she's 10 years. I worked at CTRA as a consultant when I retired in 2011 after teaching science for 38 years, receiving the -- I was a finalist for National Teacher of the Year. I tell you this for a reason. I was a Presidential Awardee in Science and Mathematics teaching. I was the Ohaus winner of Innovations in Science Teaching, and all of that gave me knowledge to share with you. Well, I'm not going to do that because everybody else in this room has already done that, and you have heard a lot.

What I want to do is when a visiting committee came to Portland where I taught for 35 years. They wanted me to talk to them about me, and I didn't do that. I said, "Let me ask you something. How about you ask me a question that might relate to climate change," 'cause that's why I'm here, Bill 5215. I don't have to talk because Noah's a head of RTT. You had me town as RTT; I don't know why. I never knew what that meant, but now I do. I told you I learned something, and I'd be very happy to be with that group. I've also in my little testimony offered to work with you. I will give you my time for free, whatever you want me to do, I would do. And I guess I want you to ask me some questions. Oh, what is that -- Oh, I'll be quiet. I have so much to say. I'm sorry. That's it; I'm done.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): I'm going to ask you a question. Summarize. You've got ten seconds to summarize. You said you've been here since 10 o'clock. What do you want us to know? In two sentences.

FIE BUDZINSKY: I'm begging you to please pass this because I know, and if you had time, I'd tell you, it is not being taught. All right? It's in the standards 2013, NGSS. I can name you ESSS 30. Somebody asked me the numbers. I heard you ask me. I got the numbers for you. Which things refer to what? They talk about global climate change and another topic, earth and human activity. It's all about what we are doing to this environment. In 2100 I won't be alive, but these guys over here will be, and they will be living in air conditioning. They can't go out. That's the future. Anyway, all that aside, I'm begging you to please pass this because standards are not curriculum. I was a curriculum coordinator. I wrote curriculum for ten years for CTRA. That's why those kids know about climate change. Because somebody gave them the opportunity. I'm just begging you, please, please, please. I know I'm a teacher, and if you don't agree with the science, let's talk about it, and we can come up with why you don't agree, and then maybe you can convince me it's not a problem.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you for your testimony. Appreciate it. Thank you. All right. Reverent Ernestine Holloway and Annie Minsky from CTR Refugee Temple. No. Okay. How about Dr. Matt Conway? Dr. Conway, he left? Let's go to some people over here. From UConn, Niralee Patel-Lye, from UConn, no? Dr. Aram Ayalon.

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DR. ARAM AYALON: Good afternoon. I'm a Professor in Education, Department of Leadership at Central Connecticut State University, and over 30 years a teacher educator. You heard from some colleagues actually from Central and elsewhere. I'm also a member of the edTPA taskforce over the working group. So, I can tell you this, that the edTPA does more harm than good. It's an artificial instrument that puts a lot of pressure on our students. Currently our students are being rigorously evaluated. They have a college supervisor who comes six times at least to observe them, to give them feedback, to grade them. They have an accompanying teacher that observes them every day, and both of them, this triangle, provides much more thoughtful, reflective, summative, formative evaluation than a stranger on a laptop far away, paid \$75 dollars an hour or per portfolio to evaluate somebody they don't know, they've never been in their classroom.

So, I want to cut this just a little short because I'm eager to hear your questions. You heard from some of my colleagues. You heard a little bit from students. Unfortunately, most of the student teachers cannot come here today to testify because March 12 for Central students is the deadline for edTPA which they work all the first two months and really lose on student teaching. So, I would like to hear your questions, since you've heard from others.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Yes, I have some questions. Dr. Ayalon, thank you. So, yesterday I attended this forum that you had over at CCSU. I was intrigued to hear some of the testimony, not just by students but by a professor at Rutgers University, and there was also a professor from UConn. And, you

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know, the panel that was present, Katie was one of the panelists, and of course, Katie was a student and was part of the panel. Both of us, Katie and myself voted against the report of the edTPA Working Group. So, there was a student on that panel, and it was Katie. You know, I just wanted to clarify that.

The other thing is, you know, listening to their testimony, I heard from two students of color, and I was just blown away by their testimony and how this affected them. And those two students also mentioned other students that had dropped out because they felt that this was just not in the right direction for them, and they just couldn't take it anymore, and they moved on. And I have yet -- and I wanted to share this with everyone -- I have yet to receive an email by any student in support of edTPA. Every email I have received so far has been against edTPA. And this is from students. And, you know, just today I received this email from a teacher in the Manchester School System (I won't say where), but said, "I'm writing here to you today regarding the implementation of edTPA in Connecticut. I have hosted student teachers for five years. I feel that edTPA is an unnecessary burden to the student teaching process and unrealistic to the teaching process. I urge you to eliminate the use of edTPA in the State of Connecticut. I feel that using edTPA narrows the students' teaching experience, is costly to teacher candidates, creates more barriers to becoming a teacher, and creates additional financial burden."

So, I mean, and I can read on and on because I received numerous amounts from students, as well. So, I'm just trying to -- I want to be fair here. I

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just want to make sure that we're doing the right thing for these students. If I'm getting testimony from students that are against it, and I have yet to receive a -- and I'm more than welcome to hear from students that are for it, if there are any here or who wants to submit a testimony, fine. But, you know, I'm all about students. So, if the students fail in the classroom moving on, they can fail, as well, as teachers or whatever. And, so, I want to get our opinion on that.

DR. ARAM AYALON: A colleague before mentioned that this is "tough love." Nobody likes to be, you know, do the high-stakes testing like the Bar Exams and so on. I understand this point, but this is different. I think the Committee should understand the difference between edTPA and, say, Praxis, that is also a high-stakes test that teacher preparation program students have to take. Very different. This is the only high-stakes test that disrupts the internship, disrupts the actual learning to be a teacher. So, Bar Exams? You take three years in law school, and then you sit and prepare and take the Bar Exams. The Bar Exam is not given -- imagine the bar exam was given in the middle of year two. Can they take classes; no, they don't have time for classes. They will prepare for the Bar Exams. So, student teaching, and I did student teaching myself, as well, back in the 80s. Student teaching is about learning to teach, and all those here in the audience that are teachers know that. I think student teaching, you start, that you are a novice, and yet you build on and you take it slowly, you take over the teaching, and then by the end of semester, you're better prepared. You're not fully prepared yet.

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But what happens then is suddenly on top of learning to teach comes this high-stakes test that you know if you're not passing it, then everything else goes down the drain. You know, all the three years, two or more years that you took classes, you did hundreds of hours of field experience. All of this goes down the drain. My colleague called it rigorous. It's not rigorous at all because it reduces teaching to planning, instruction, and assessment. Teaching is about creating a relationship with kids. Teaching is about being a colleague with other teachers, and that's what student teaching is about - developing your professional -- you're entering the profession of teaching, and comes edTPA and disrupts the whole thing.

So, the extreme example is for the K-12 because PE and art and [inaudible-04:55:13] and music do 2 eight weeks of student teaching. So, it takes them eight weeks to prepare the edTPA, to artificially create a unit and so forth, and then videotape, and get permissions from kids and sometimes it's very difficult because they are undocumented or so on. Do all this, finish, and you're gone to another school in a higher level. So, I see edTPA as something very different than any other. My colleagues try to make it, "Oh, everybody's taking the Bar Exams and all this." This is not. This is very different. This disrupts the classes of learning to become a teacher.

So, you know, to understand where the students come, they're not unhappy because it's a high-stake. They're taking the Praxis, and they'll take it as many times until they can pass it. But here, it takes away from being with the kids. It takes away

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from being with the cooperating teacher. It's just too disruptive. So, it's not the issue of being too rigorous. It's not that issue. The issue is that it completely disrupts the essential part of -- the most important part of our teacher preparation program - student teaching. That's really the crux of that.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Doctor, so, with this tool, there are sections to it, right? And if they fail one section, then what happens?

DR. ARAM AYALON: If they fail one section, they have to retake it, which costs them an extra \$100 dollars. And often what it really means is rewriting it. So, that's another point that people say that edTPA is really rigorous, and it also reflects the readiness of student teachers to teach. Actually, there's no evidence in the research in the literature that those who finish successful edTPA are better than those who didn't, or that they're better prepared. What it does reflect is the ability to write, academic writing. And, therefore, students who are their -- English is their second language, don't do as well in edTPA because it's 50-page writing intensive. And that doesn't mean you're a good teacher. You know what I mean? If they chose your writing skills, so English majors do better. A student said yesterday on the panel, the one that had a major in English said, "Oh, it wasn't a big problem for me because I'm used to writing all of this." But somebody who is not, then they could be the best teacher in the world. We heard yesterday from a student teacher who was here in Hartford and won high praises from everybody. Her students and parents are keeping in touch a year

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later with her. And she had a hard time writing this portfolio because of the writing process.

So, in that sense, edTPA is not authentic, it's not valid, and it's not reliable because it's artificial in the sense that basically the reader reads what you wrote, and that's based on what -- they base their decision on what you wrote, not how you actually teach.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, and just one last question. In regard to the enrollment at CCSU: How many students of color are enrolled presently in teacher certification?

DR. ARAM AYALON: I don't have the data here in front of me, but I know very few. In my classes, I would say, on average, one or two. And another issue, of course, is that when you increase the cost for another \$300 dollars, you increase the displeasure and tension, and you also create an artificial situation where many students of color who are more committed to social justice, to multicultural education feel constrained by the structure that edTPA gives you. There is a big handbook that tells you exactly how they want the data, the material; so, something like project-based is discouraged. So, we are reshaping what teacher education means, and we're narrowing down what it means, and that will have, I'm afraid, a negative effect on future teachers.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your testimony. I'm just curious. So, we heard from many of your colleagues today, and they have a totally opposite view on that. And, so,

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it's difficult in the position that we're in trying to make sense of what the direction to go. But the majority, as we heard today, believe in this preparation program, and I think I heard earlier that even if we decided to eliminate it for any reason, they would continue to use it. So, what would your response be to that?

DR. ARAM AYALON: Well, you know, another state, I believe it was Illinois, that also the legislature voted against edTPA, and they continue using it. But, you know, if you look at the literature, and I, you know, in the last few months especially, I spent numerous hours reading research in the fields. And I would say that over 90 percent of the research is negative about edTPA. There is no evidence that it helps. I think that in the era where we've seen No Child Left Behind and the impact of high-stakes testing, and I'm afraid -- I mean, you can continue with that, but, you know, it has a very negative effect on us as teacher educators. For example, the seminar, the one-credit seminar that is given to student teachers while they are in the student teaching, it's a great place for them to reflect and to share. Now there's no time for that. The seminar is all about preparing them how to fit what the raters and what edTPA want to do. So, I think you can go ahead and do that, but I think what you will experience is several things. There will be fewer minority kids in education. There will be fewer teachers all together because we already have a decline in enrollment. In elementary education, in Central Connecticut State University, there is only now one section of each course; we used to have three sections. We have declined enrollment. You will see also less placement in Hartford and in the

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other urban areas because in those places, it's difficult to pass edTPA. You [inaudible-05:02:30] a girl to Simsbury, you got to go to West Hartford where it's easier. You can get better access to videotaping. You can have better maybe students who are used to being videotaped and also.

So, you can go ahead and do that, but the impact on that will be in there for the next many generations to come. You see now the impact of educating New York. New York State installed it a few years ago, and guess what they're doing now? So, first of all, they reduced the cut number so they can get less people. If you fail edTPA but you passed with flying colors with everybody else, then you can go to a committee and get it overridden. All sorts of ways. Oh, the alternative programs don't have to do edTPA. By the way, you noticed that in Connecticut, you can come out of state and still not take the edTPA. So, they're not totally committing. They want to keep people who can't -- so, I say, if you want to keep it the way it is, you will see the consequences. And I know we'll get back together here in several years and say, "What do we do about the shortage of teachers? What do we do about all of the problems of every moment." I already see -- I teach a course that is a prerequisite, and students are already dropping out.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wondered, would you recommend the test at the end of the four-year period?

DR. ARAM AYALON: So, can you clarify?

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REP. JOHNSON (49TH): So, you're talking about a test halfway through the -- for the TPA, there's a test that's going on that's halfway through the academic performance before they provide teacher training. So, would you do it after the training, after the four years? You gave an analogy about the law school.

DR. ARAM AYALON: So, actually Connecticut was the first one. I don't know if you're familiar with the Bedford folio. So, the Bedford folio is -- so, really edTPA is the Bedford portfolio but on steroids. So, Bedford portfolio was actually that -- a videotape of yourself in teaching the first two years. So, if I would compare the Bedford portfolio to edTPA, the Bedford portfolio makes more sense because they are already teachers. So, I would say -- but, you know, the Bedford portfolio failed because it was, again, too much work and costly to the state and all sorts of reasons. But I would say that if you probably do that -- do a similar one but later on in your third or fourth year of teaching.

But let me say another thing. This proposal actually calls for assessment, but for every institution to submit its own assessment for the state. So, it's a compromise, and I think it's a pretty good compromise because it still maintains the accountability of the institution, and it gets the institution what you want to accomplish with edTPA, just insufficient to talk to each other and to create a common assessment. We've already a common assessment in student teaching, but it can be improved. And also it maintains the local control over evaluation. The writers will be familiar with the context, with the school, with the kids, with

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everything, and can be provided better feedback to their students than what we have now.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you for that explanation and your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarthy Vahey.

REP. MCCARTHY VAHEY (133RD): Good afternoon, Chairmans McCrory and Sanchez, ranking member McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. I'm so happy to be here with you. It's wonderful to see you. I do miss the Education Committee.

I'm here today in support of 5215 including climate change in our curriculum instruction. Earlier you heard testimony from a young person who said that our current students are our future leaders, and I would argue that our current students are our current leaders. And I'm going to introduce you to one of our current leaders today - Lena Kufferman, a student from Fairfield who's going to talk to you about this bill.

LENA KUFFERMAN: Good morning, Chairs, and members of the Educational Committee. My name is Lena Kufferman. I am a junior at Fairfield Warde High School in Fairfield, Connecticut. I'd just like to preface by thanking you for giving me your time today.

So I'm speaking on House Bill 5215 - AND ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM. I believe that for every person in this room education is critical for our progress. I would never even know how to ride a bike if I never had training wheels, just as I would never be sitting here today

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if one day in English class I hadn't fallen down a rabbit hole of environmental articles and reports. For every person in this room, public education becomes the first step in a life-long series of self-improvement and community involvement. The importance of education in igniting any kind of innovation including environmental innovation is why it is so essential to begin including climate change education to Connecticut's youth.

Climate change is worsening rapidly. Sea levels are rising at its fastest rate in 3000 years. The impacts of climate change if we do not reach certain targets will become irreversible. We have a decade to get our act together. The window of time that is slamming as I speak. This urgency demands action now. However, this action must be educated, and it cannot be random. This necessary educated action begins in all levels of education in our public school system.

The only way to ensure this extensive comprehension amongst our new generation in Connecticut, the only way for Connecticut to become a leader in this world's battle against climate changes, is through the inclusion of climate change instruction in the public school curriculum. Because of this necessity, I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 5215. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you for your testimony. Questions. Representative Gilcrest.

REP. GILCREST (18TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you both for being here. Lena, did you receive or do you receive climate change education in your school.

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LENA KUFFERMAN: So, last year there was about a two-month-long unit on climate change in my French class, but I do believe that our students in Connecticut deserve and have the right of learning about this very pressing issue in their respective language. There are also, you know, classes like AP Environmental Science where students seek out the opportunity to learn, but I think that, honestly, the issue of climate change is beyond just allowing people to seek out information. I think that it has gotten to the urgency that as of right now, all students deserve -- like every single student deserves the knowledge of climate change.

REP. MCCARTHY VAHEY (133RD): Mr. Chairman, if I may add just one sentence to that. As I was speaking earlier with Lena, one of the things that she said to me with respect to that was that it makes sense that the education be a part of all of the curriculum throughout Pre-K through high school so that it was intertwined and not just in specific classes but as part of the entire curriculum.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Well, I would agree with you both, and I thank you for being here today and for your advocacy.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chair, and I'll go very fast, but we miss you on Education Committee, as well, but did you say that you had two months of study in your French class?

LENA KUFFERMAN: Yeah.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay, so I'll talk to you later.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Well, give her a little something, give her a little something, give her a little something.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Tres bien.

LENA KUFFERMAN: Merci beaucoup.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Ah, good, thank you [Laughter]. Thank you for your testimony.

LENA KUFFERMAN: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Amelia Colon and Leticia Colon, Green Eco Warriors.

AMELIA COLON: Hi, I'm Amelia Colon De Mejias, and I'm from Windsor, Connecticut, and I'm 11 years old. I'm here to talk about climate education and the lack of it. I'm in fifth grade, and in school I only ever had a couple lessons about climate change. Not even climate change, just the climate. And it's my sixth years of attending public school; so, I haven't really learned about climate change.

I'm passionate about the climate because there's only one Earth; so, there's no second chance, and we can't do anything to stop the problem if we don't know that there is a problem or if we don't know what's causing the problem. That's why there was one school project that I was really passionate about, and it was a school contest. You picked a topic, and whoever wrote the best essay got their paper to be in the newspaper. The topics to choose from were greenhouse gases, water, and housing. I chose greenhouse gases because it related to climate change, and I learned much more about climate change than I already knew; so, if it was a more important

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part in our school's curriculum, then imagine how much we'd all learn.

There are many, many people who want climate education to happen, but they are still some who don't. This is why I'm talking to you today. I'm seeking support of climate education for all youth so we can assure equal climate and energy education. In my school, kids don't know about climate change or how bad it is. They don't even know climate change is a real thing. So, basically, we don't know what we don't know; so, let's change that together because my future depends on it and so does yours. So you have any questions?

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): What school do you attend?

AMELIA COLON: I go to John F. Kennedy (JFK).

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): In Windsor?

AMELIA COLON: Mmm-hmm.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Great. They're doing a great job with you. Any questions?

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Amelia, right?

AMELIA COLON: Yeah.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Eleven years old and up here testifying in front of us. Hey, I couldn't do that what I was 11, sorry. But, great job. And, so, you stated that you've learned very little about climate change in school so far, right?

AMELIA COLON: I learned nothing about climate change in school. They just teach like a couple lessons about the climate in five years of grade school and one year of pre-K, basically.

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REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): So, when did they start teaching that? Was it last year, this year. The little bit that you --

AMELIA COLON: This year.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay, this year. Okay, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay, next up we have Patti Koller Sisson from Middletown High School.

PATRICIA KOLLER SISSON: Good afternoon, Committee members, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Patrician Sisson, and I teach Earth Science to juniors and seniors at Middletown High School. I support H.B. 5215, the climate-teaching bill because my experiences have convinced me that students are receiving insufficient levels of instruction on climate change.

I teach juniors and seniors, and I'm getting them at the end of their careers in our school district. I assess their prior knowledge when I begin the classes on the many topics I plan to teach which include ocean and atmospheric science. Most of them know that climate change is somehow related to pollution, but they can't elaborate beyond that. These students show limited understanding of the greenhouse effect. While they have heard about fossil fuels, they have trouble connecting the dots between their use in society today and the climate crisis. While students have generally learned about energy transfer, they display little understanding of the critical roles played by the ocean and atmosphere in distributing energy around the globe.

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Climate change is included in the next generation science standards used throughout the state for science teaching, but teaching these standards is like navigating a canoe on the Amazon. There are endless tributaries, each worth investigating, and investigating each tributary is what the NGSS are all about. Therefore, teachers must have a specific course to climate change instruction or they will very possibly never get there.

This is especially a problem in the lower grades where teachers often lack specific training and will naturally focus in on topics at which they're most at ease. It's also a problem in high school where earth sciences traditionally received short shrift, especially for college-bound students who generally take chemistry and physics instead of the earth science electives. If state statute requires the teaching of climate change, elementary and middle school teachers will set a more intentional course through their science instruction.

If state statute requires the teaching of climate change, school administrators will design course sequences for all high school students that encompass the study of the oceans and atmosphere. If state statutes require the teaching of climate change, teachers of all levels will make more concerted efforts at obtaining quality curriculum materials.

If I might just conclude, in conclusion, the passage of this bill would promote the development of much-needed instructional materials that will not only teach the alarming realities of the climate crisis but would emphasize the opportunity inherent in the sustainability revolution that will be necessary to

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solve it. Teaching one without the other can leave students feeling hopeless instead of informed. It can leave them feeling apathetic instead of activated. So, this is a critically important bill to ensure that our rising new generation in Connecticut is equipped to tackle the existential challenges that the preceding generations have, unfortunately, left for them. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Seeing no questions, we are moving on the Representative Dathan.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My name is Lucy Dathan. I represent the 142nd District which is part of Norwalk and New Canaan. I have quite a tough act here to follow. You've had some wonderful testimony. I've been watching up in my office, and you've got some great bills in front of your Committee.

I'm here to testify in favor of House Bill 5217 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO STUDY ISSUE RELATING TO SCHOOL START TIMES. When I moved to Connecticut several years ago, I was faced with having my children having to get a 6:40 in the morning bus for my oldest child. Every morning, he'd wake up crying and saying, "Why are they making children get up when it's dark outside," and having to wait for the bus in the dark. In seeing this, it was really distressing. My normal, happy, energetic, communicative 12-year-old son was becoming a shadow of himself.

I joined a committee that dealt with school start times in New Canaan, Connecticut, where my son went to school, and got very involved, and we have been working with the administration there for several

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years to move this issue forward. I've not been involved with the committee as much since I've been a little bit busy here at the Capitol, but the committee is still working, and both in New Canaan and in Norwalk, I'm pleased to announce that they have made significant headway.

And, so, I'm very pleased that the Committee is looking at this issue again, and I'm also pleased that it's actually becoming a study. I do not support any sort of educational mandate for this, but I do believe that if the Committee establishes a good taskforce, that they would be able to study the issue and give towns the information that they would need to make decisions in order to enact it for their own towns. There're a lot of things that need to be addressed, as you probably are well aware, not just the busing and the logistic issues, but looking at teacher contracts, logistics in terms of, you know, buildings and how things are organized, and also what's going on with the students. Many students today are working, involved in sports, and also involved in other after-school activities. So, we need to be mindful of all those. And also for the teachers.

And I think another issue, you know, I'd like to see that the taskforce addresses talking about the younger students. Just one thing I wanted to add is we don't want to pit one group off of another group. I don't want to have six-year-olds waiting in the dark for the bus, either. So, I do think we need to be mindful of those children but also looking at how brains work for all these people.

If you look at my written testimony, I have references to the sort of research and some more

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information. I'm just talking off the cuff of what I'd like to express. Any questions? Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Okay. Thank you. Letitia Colon.

LETITIA COLON: Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez. I'm going to say something very brief because there's a little girl behind me. She's 11 years old like my daughter, who's been waiting patiently since eight o'clock this morning. I don't know if maybe she could come sit next to me. She's from South Windsor.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Sure. Is that Sofia?

LETITIA COLON: Thank you. That is Sofia.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Come on up, Sofia.

LETITIA COLON: So thank you for allowing me the opportunity to come up. I'm sorry; I didn't hear you call my name when you called my daughter. So, I apologize. I will make my testimony brief so that Sofia can have her time.

I'm a Commissioner for the State of Connecticut, Commission on Women, Children, Elderly Equity and Opportunity, and I have come to express my desire for the inclusion of climate change instruction in public school curriculum, H.B. 5215. Climate change is the biggest problem facing youth and families, and the impacts of this already resulting in floods, fires, loss of resources, and the growing cost of energy and water. There're over 400,000 families in Connecticut that cannot keep their lights and heat on today. This could be addressed if we take action to educate people on resources such as energy and

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water. We could draw down demand and protect the vulnerable populations like Sofia and my daughter Amelia, and the other children that have spoken today.

In addition to this climate change education, we must close this knowledge gap to equip future generations with the tools to solve the complex climate issues and open doors to future careers which they do not even know exist. This simple step will ensure that our children have an opportunity for a better future for tomorrow. Now, I would like to let Sofia have the mic.

SOFIA HOLOVATSKA: My name is Sofia Holovatska, and I'm a student at South Windsor Middle School, and I'm here to support House Bill 5215. I strongly believe that climate change should be taught as part of the curriculum in all public schools in Connecticut. I believe it's important for all public schools, including all students and teachers, to be aware of what is currently happening around them in the environment. Because climate change is such an active and impacting conflict, it's extremely important for students to be educated on this topic. Our current generation needs to be more aware of it than anyone else. As we witness the effect of our human impact, not everyone, especially younger students, realize that.

In my personal experience at my school, I don't have many opportunities to learn about climate change. Students are always eager to learn, and those who want to get involved with climate change don't have much opportunity to do so. Schools are an excellent resource to begin educating students on the climate change crisis. Teaching kids about the importance

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of climate change would allow them to become actively involved and make a difference towards our earth.

The passing of this bill can help raise awareness about climate change, not only among kids but their families and many others. It's important for people to first learn about climate change in order to realize how much of an impact it can have on our future if we don't set upon it now. Learning about climate change can motivate students and families to adapt to a more climate change friendly lifestyle which can have a positive impact when many others continue to do so. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your brave testimony. Any questions? We have Mary Yordon followed by Jennifer Ferraro. Mary and Jennifer.

MARY YORDON: Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, the distinguished members of this Committee. My name is Mary Yordan. I am a teacher in the Norwalk Public Schools. I am a Divisional Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 90 local unions representing nearly 30,000 public and private sector employees. Our members include more than 15,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses, and other school personnel across the state. It is on behalf of certified educators in AFT Connecticut that I appear before you today.

The AFT Connecticut members of the preK-12 Council, our certified members, which is made up of teachers from over 22 locals considered the question of edTPA and unanimously agreed that this program should not determine qualification for certification for pre-

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service teachers in Connecticut. We support H.B. 5376 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDTPA AS PART OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS that calls for cessation of the statewide implementation of edTPA. A lot of people have spoken. I have heard those comments. I'm going to try to just edit what's already been said.

From a teacher perspective, we find that the disruption to student teaching is real. It has been referred to. When we have the opportunity to work with an emerging teacher in the student teaching setting, we are eager to work on those types of relationships, that type of thoughtful work that needs to be done on school, classroom management, and lots of topics that are not part of edTPA, and what we find increasingly is that we're working with our cooperating teacher candidate on edTPA instead of what we would prefer to.

In conclusion, I also want to speak in support of the Native American Studies, S.B. 314, and also on behalf of H.B. 5217 to establish a working group. I have submitted a statement in writing. Are there any questions? Thank you for this opportunity.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Hi, thank you for coming in testifying. So, in regard to edTPA, you're saying that teachers are supportive of it or not supportive of edTPA.

MARY YORDON: We would support the bill to cease the implementation of edTPA. We feel that cooperative teaching relationships between students and teachers are the essential part of learning, not what is submitted in 70-page documents, not what is evaluated in a videotape by a person who has never met the candidate. We think that the essential

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cooperating relationship of a student teacher in a classroom working with students or the relationship of a university professional working with a teacher candidate -- those relationships are crucial to developing well-qualified teachers, and the submission of a 70-page portfolio that's carefully written, the submission of a videotape is actually, as has been pointed out before, measuring the ability to write academic text, the ability to carefully videotape or edit video -- that doesn't necessarily correspond with the skills of an effective teacher.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And do you believe all the institutions here in the State of Connecticut can band together and come up with their own certification measure tool, so to speak, instead of the edTPA, something that's going to cater to the State of Connecticut and teachers of the State of Connecticut?

MARY YORDON: We would support the development of such an assessment. We have already come together in the State of Connecticut to create the SEED model and model for evaluation of teachers. I have no reason to think that we can't do the same for emerging teachers.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mary, good to see you. I have had -- I think I had five other meetings and hearings today; so, I floated in and out of this discussion, and I've heard some of it. So, I have a very concrete question to ask you. Is it -- I've heard about disruption of the courses of people preparing to be teachers where they have

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to stop and go through this. I've heard about format which you've just talked a lot about. I've heard very little about content, but that may be because I was out of the room. So, I wanted to ask you which of these things, or is it all of them that you think are inappropriate? And also could you elaborate a little bit on the aspect of content for me?

MARY YORDON: Teachers are required to pass practice tests for the content. So, we have several good assessments already to make sure that a math teacher can understand math concepts and that a French teacher teaches French, and all that. EdTPA - I'm not an expert in edTPA. We experience edTPA in our classrooms when we have cooperating students come in, and we just don't feel that they're working on something that accurately authentically assesses their skills as an emerging teacher. And they are working on -- what seems most inappropriate is the amount of work. I also did the best portfolio.

The amount of work that they have to do for edTPA isn't in relation to the need for that work. We would prefer to see our candidates working on classroom management techniques, building relationships with those students, and they're not able to do that. And we are not able to have those conversations with these new teachers because they are busy editing videotapes or securing somebody to videotape or getting the permissions to videotape -- all of the different tasks that have to be associated with this. I'm not sure if that answered your question.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Well, it does. I'm getting more of a flavor. Is there a format you could

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imagine -- and I don't mean to put you on the spot, but, I mean, is there a format you could imagine that would be workable.

MARY YORDON: For a new assessment? I think to the extent that we can have a streamlined process, all teachers are undergoing teacher evaluation once they're certified. They are also undergoing a mentor -- the TEAM program -- that's the orientation program for new teachers over the course of the first two years. EdTPA doesn't streamline, doesn't wedge or dovetail into that process. I would expect that if we were evaluating teachers and saying that the SEED rubrics or the Danielson rubrics or another set of rubrics are all very similar. If that's what good teaching consists of, and student outcomes and the tests, that's what we should be measuring our student teachers on the basis of, as well.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you very much. That's helpful.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Nick Barta. Valeka Clarke. Joe Barnes.

JOSEPH BARNES: Hello, thank you. My names is Joseph Barnes. I'm on the Board of Directors for Connecticut's Inter Religious Eco Justice Network, a voting member of Farmington's Green Efforts Commission, Zero Hour ambassador, and I work full-time as a lab manager and quality assurance specialist at an indoor recirculating aquaculture facility in Waterbury. I've experienced a number of marine science climate change mitigation research projects. But, I'm not here directly for any of those groups. That was just to give a little background about saying that I know a little about

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what I'm talking about. So, I'm here as a concerned global citizen in support of House Bill 5215, implementing climate change in the Connecticut schools' curriculum.

I hosted a climate change symposium in my hometown of Suffield last June, and I remember advocating for the same bill back then. We should have been teaching about climate change since the 1980s when Exxon Mobil actively silenced their own scientists that predicted warming global temperatures due to burning fossil fuels. We should have been teaching about global warming since 1912 when New Zealand's news article described the warming effects of burning coal. And we should have been teaching climate science since the late 1700s when Alexander von Humboldt first described anthropogenic environmental degradation. And if you don't know who Humboldt is, maybe you would if climate change was mandatory.

But we're over 200 years past Humboldt's day, and we need to start somewhere. The fact remains that if this bill passes, it will be the first in the nation of its kind. We can learn that the mitochondria are the powerhouses of the cell all we want, but we need to make sure that Connecticut students can see through rampant disinformation campaigns funded by fossil fuel giants and special interests and understand why they see people like Greta Thunberg on the nightly news. Future generations have a right to know why most amphibians, birds, and insects will be extinct in their lifetime or why there are microplastics in their drinking water. Climate change doesn't just mean global warming. It expands to biodiversity loss, changing landscapes and weather patterns, and racial and socioeconomic

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injustices. And Connecticut has the most proportional demographics to the rest of the nation, and that's why it's imperative that Connecticut lead the way in climate change education, to ensure an equitable chance at life and learning for all.

Because of my environmental experiences, I've been invited for two years now to speak at local elementary schools and even the tutors, teachers, and parents in the audience have come up to me and told me that they were unaware of many of the issues and vowed to make changes in their daily lives. Education is the key to public and societal changes, and you need an educated youth base to lead the world into a green future. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Just quickly, Mr. Chair. Thank you so much, and thank you for your testimony. I just thought it was very insightful; so, I appreciate your being here today. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Jennifer Ferraro, Jennifer? No Jennifer, okay, no problem. Melissa Scetan, Melissa? Angel Serrano. No Angel?

ANGEL SERRANO: Hi. Thank you, Chairman, Vice Chairs, and everybody on the Education Committee. I am speaking today, testifying on 5215 in support of it. I think that today's kids need to learn the science they need to be prepared for the future. I think learning about the science will prepare them with the tools and knowledge to empower the youth and identify environmental injustices in their community and fix the climate change problem. This will lead to innovation to combat this issue. Just speaking as a long-time resident here in Hartford, I

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went to Hartford Public Schools, and there was no climate change education; there was only earth science. There was a civics class, and I loved it, but there was nothing for me to use those civics skills that I learned. Later in life, I found my passion with the environmental field, and I wish I had learned it much easier because I jumped from field to field before actually finding my place here of what I'm doing today.

So, I think by providing this education early in a child's life, in a student's life, we can give him the options to find a career field that will help us all in the long run. So, I think we should definitely prepare these kids for the problem and also for the economy, job economy, and for the future that will be. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Right on time. Alex Rodriguez.

ALEX RODRIGUEZ: Hello, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, distinguished members of the Committee, on behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 5215 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM. I have submitted testimony on-line, and, so, I'm not going to go into too much detail regarding what I wrote there. But, I want to take this opportunity to point out examples of educators in Connecticut specifically catering to minority youth about climate change where this is working.

In Windsor, Connecticut, we have the Green Eco Warriors. Leticia Colon was just here earlier. She

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goes into communities such as Hartford to bring the importance of her "Switch it Off" initiative, which educates kids on the importance of turning off their cellphones, unplugging their tablets, and actually engaging with the outside world. In New Haven, there is Solar Youth, Inc., a community organization that has astounding effects on educating kids on the importance of renewables and energy efficiency. In the City of Bridgeport, there is Groundwork Bridgeport where that is actively working to educate children about soil sampling and water testing and so many more things. I, myself, have had experience educating youth about the importance of environmental justice and mitigating carbon pollution in communities of color and low-income communities. It's critical that we change a "may" to a "shall" regarding this piece of legislation. The Next Generation science standards are already there.

And, so, making this a mandatory part of the curriculum is the best thing that we could do to empower youth to identify environmental injustices, help them understand climate science, and get them ready for a growing green jobs economy. Thank you, Senator McCrory.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony, Alex. Any questions?

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Alex, and I'm glad you pointed that out. This is what the bill does. It just changed that "may" to a "shall." And maybe moving down forward we can talk about an expanded curriculum, but right now we just don't have the resources for that, but I'm glad you pointed that

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out because a lot of people that have testified today did not point that out.

ALEX RODRIGUEZ: Representative Sanchez, I believe that there is a way that we can come to common ground on this piece of legislation, and I would love to meet with you as well as including educators, specifically who have targeted environmental justice in communities and environmental justice communities, so that we could make this a flourishing, successful curriculum.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you.

ALEX RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Ann Berman, no Ann? Guy West followed by Kim Libera.

GUY WEST: Good afternoon, Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Guy West, and I'm here on behalf of the Connecticut office of the Clean Water Fund. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 5215. And I'm here today because this is very, very important. I'm here today because I had great educators, and I recall the first Earth Day in 1970, 50 years ago, giving some indication of how old I am. And my school dedicated an entire week to discussion and assemblies on the environment and on climate. And it left a very longstanding impression with me.

Public Act 18-181, which was passed two years ago in an effort to encourage schools to include climate change in the Next Generation curriculum, had fallen considerably short of its intended purpose which was to encourage the instruction of students about climate change and its impact on the environment in

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which we live, as well as on all lifeforms. The lack of education in this regard speaks to the narrow vision and short-sightedness in our thinking forward to future generations. We must provide clear and understandable instruction in order to provide a path for our youth to develop practices that improve and sustain the health and well-being of all lifeforms.

You're heard it earlier, and I'll say it again: Climate changes is perhaps the biggest threat to citizens worldwide and particularly to those whose lifestyles and practices least contribute to the causes of climate change, yet whose lives will be more adversely impacted by these changes across the globe. While some would say that it is too late to combat the effects of climate change, we must defiantly respond with combative action. Education on the reality, the cause, and the devastating impact which climate change is having on our planet is the most important thing with which we can arm our children.

In summary, I just want to say that, again, it's such an important subject, and as a society, we have adopted this mentality that corporations do - it's all about next quarter's earnings, and we're not looking at the long term. We're not planning sufficiently for the long-term. Our lives and the lives our children and all future generations are dependent on visionary thinking. Thank you for this opportunity.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you for your testimony. Any question? Thank you.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much, and I just thank you for your testimony and looking at the

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history because we're about the same age, and I think that I remember the smelly rivers and lots of smog, and we've been living in a relatively cleaner environment, but we need to continue that progress. So, I'm really appreciate of you bringing up the timeframes. Thank you so much.

GUY WEST: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Thank you for your patience, also.

GUY WEST: Well, I learned a lot being here today. It's amazing the subject matters and all that's involved. So, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Kim.

KIM LIBERA: Kim Libera, Middletown. I'm a graduate of Rutgers University and CCSU. I hold advanced degrees in both Mathematics and Earth Science. I think it's long overdue that there should be a full-year course in earth science, preferably on the high school level. I haven't seen it since, honestly, in school since the seventh grade. I don't know why it was dropped out, but it is very pertinent to the world. I'd like to see within it a quarter of astronomy, a quarter of meteorology, a quarter of geology, and a quarter of oceanography.

We have a big geo-heritage in the United States, and I think it would help the public combat natural hazards better if they had this information which, in turn, would help slightly reduce our enormous public health care bill.

The STEM field we got into, I would just like to caution people on one thing. I don't like to see this particular course become politicized in the way

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that it has in the media, and that's because of a lot of partisan misinformation/disinformation. All four of these subfields relate together, and you can't understand one fully without the other.

In essence what I'm saying is I don't want to see the first lesson of, say, the meteorology part of the course saying that carbon dioxide is what makes our climate. The sun is the primary driver of our climate. The earth works on some very fancy feedback cycles, and it does create for a good discussion in the classroom. There are many causes to climate; okay, many causes to climate change. That's the other thing scientists can agree on. And I certainly would be happy to help the Education Committee or Department of Education put forth such a curriculum.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Karen Senich from the Waterbury Boys and Girls Club followed by Sharon Tripp from OPMAD.

KAREN SENICH: Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. I am Karen Senich. I'm the Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Waterbury. On behalf of my club, my family members, I thank you for the opportunity to testify here today regarding House Bill 5216 - AN ACT THAT WOULD ELIMINATE THE LICENSURE EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING CHILD CARE SERVICES, and that obviously includes the Boys and Girls Club.

My full testimony has been submitted to your committee, and I would also like to point out that I am joined here today by several other directors from the 16 clubs around the state. The Boys and Girls

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Club in Waterbury has been providing safe after-school programs for Waterbury's youth for over 130 years. We adhere fully to the mandates of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. In 2019 we provided a safe after-school space for over 260 young people. We currently have 180 after-school members and average about 100 or 120 kids in our building every day. Our after-school programs and after-school programs around the state increase the opportunities for children and youth to succeed.

In Waterbury, our members are as diverse as the city we represent. Our members come from diverse family units including children in foster care. Over 87 percent of our children qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch, and we only charge \$115 dollars for the entire school year.

The licensing requirements currently contemplate daycare centers and primarily the care of children zero to five or those not old enough to attend school. We do not provide daycare. We serve school-age children in an after-school setting. We are a youth development organization, not a daycare.

Let me conclude, that we do adhere to the strict standards of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America which include annual background checks for every single employee, board member, and volunteer that has any interaction with our children. It also includes annual safety assessment and board-level standing safety committees. I would also like to point out that all of the clubs run licensed summer camps. So, we are not objecting to the idea of being licensed. We object to being licensed or being forced into a category that we are not. We

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are not daycare; we are after-school, and we would look forward to the opportunity to smart, thoughtful, informed discussions to address this issue.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Sharon Tripp is followed by -- I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Wait, wait.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you, Chairman, thank you. I know you got cut short, but I do have a question. So, besides the background checks, what would be the impact of this change on your program? Can you elaborate on, I think, where you were trying to go?

KAREN SENICH: The daycare contemplates a 10-to-1 ratio which would mean that I would either have to cut the number of children I serve in the City of Waterbury, and again include in this analysis all the other after-school organizations that exist in our city that are not statutorily exempt but are not licensed but serve the after-school community. So we would either have to cut our numbers to below 100. We would have to increase our costs from \$115 dollars for the entire school year, and I'd like to add that over 85 percent of our families are considered asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed. So, they do not qualify for Care 4 Kids. We, in fact, do not accept Care 4 Kids in the summer because when changes happened in 2000 and I want to say 16 or 15, our camp numbers went from about 40 children who qualified for Care 4 Kids to five. So, that is our demographic is working parents.

We would also have to increase our staff exponentially. We would have to hire head teachers, and we have budget of \$550,000 dollars that we run our club with. It should also be noted that our

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building opened in 1960 and does not comply with the building requirements in the daycare licensing regulations. We exceed the background check requirement. We exceed all those things. We have safety committees, and we do safety checks to ensure that safety is our primary concern, and it is the primary concern among all of our clubs. So, we would be looking at either charging our parents by the week probably well over \$115 dollars, potentially raising our cost so much that our parents would -- we would have to then look to accept Care 4 Kids which would put our 200-ish families back into the rolls of Care 4 Kids for the entire year, for which it would cost.

And, again, this is not just our Boys and Girls Club issue in the City of Waterbury. It is a city issue, and we have over 19,000 children in the city in schools right now.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you very much. I'm glad you got the chance to share.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Napoli.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Karen, thank you for being here. Thank you for all the work that the Boys and Girls Club do for the City of Waterbury and throughout the State of Connecticut. If children were cut from your program, is there a place for them to go? What happens to them?

KAREN SENICH: No, actually, they wouldn't have anywhere to go. Our children come to us. A lot of it has to do with geography. We're on the bus route. Our children come to us because, as I said,

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our parents don't qualify for Care 4 Kids. Our parents come to us because they work.

Our parents come to us because they want their children to have safe after-school opportunities, and I use the word "opportunities" because we focus on academics. We're currently talking to the City of Waterbury about what we can do to help the city's reading and math scores; what we can do in the after-school hours. Our children have opportunities to talk about careers and college. Our children have the opportunity to learn how to be good citizens. So, these kids would be left on their own, and to quote, a couple years ago, one of our members who was in middle school was being interviewed by somebody from the local ABC affiliate, and he said, "If I didn't come here, I'd just be hanging out on the street," and that's essentially what would happen to most of our children and probably in the City of Waterbury if this impacts the other organizations as well as the other clubs that are here today.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Okay, great, thank you. And, could you walk me through the process. So, when you hire an employee, what kind of background checks do you actually do?

KAREN SENICH: So, we do a criminal national and state background check and the sex registry offense national and statewide check, and we do that annually on everybody. So, that if something was to change, we know about it, and we do that from everybody on staff, myself, my board, but we also do it for the numerous high school volunteers that we get in to help our children. So, anybody who has

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direct contact with our children has a background check before they go through our doors.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Then, Mr. Chairman, just one more question? In this Committee today, we heard a lot about literacy and the importance of literacy. As part of the after-school programs do they teach literacy to the students?

KAREN SENICH: We do. We do homework help. We the Lexi Pro, which is the program that's used in the City of Waterbury to help bolster the kids' reading abilities. We do reading challenges to encourage our children to read. We have staff, and we have volunteers on hand to help our children with their reading. We understand that if our children get out of third grade and they don't know how to read, they're not going to be able to learn beyond that. And, so, that is everything that we aspire to do for our children is academic focus and a large part is the ability to read. And we have books in every room. We do programs with literacy volunteers in Waterbury to get books to our children and to get books into their homes.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Candelaria.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple questions. I'm trying to wrap my head around all of this. Now, what would be the impact if this bill passes? What will be the impact to you? What percentage of your children would not be able to attend your program?

KAREN SENICH: Right now, it would probably be almost two-thirds. We wouldn't be able to take

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them. And, again, as I look at this, I haven't done a thorough analysis, if this was to pass, of what we would do. Assuming we could get back past the fact that my building doesn't meet the requirements of a daycare because it's not a daycare, I would either have to double my budget to make the hires that are required under the legislation. I would have to reduce the number of children to meet the 10-to-1 ratio as opposed to the 20-to-1 ratio that we have mandated by BGCA because, again, these are school-age, verbal children. And we could potentially, depending on the regulations because they don't contemplate serving teens, we could send all of our teens out onto the street, and they, too, would have nowhere to go. And these teens, at least from my club, they choose to come to the Boys and Girls Club every day. Where younger kids are sent there by their parents, teens do this by choice because they feel safe, they have fun, they're learning things, they get opportunities. We take them on college tours. They get to visit employers. They hear from legislators including Representative Napoli. So, they have those opportunities, and they come by choice. And ultimately, we in Waterbury could end up closing because of the financial constraints that this would cause us.

The other interesting point that somebody made earlier today, and I'll take it from them, we're a nonprofit. Most of our money -- the \$115 dollars for our members is a small fraction of our very small budget; it's about \$20,000 to \$25,000 dollars out a \$550,000 dollar budget. The rest of it is raised from foundations, corporations, and individuals. If I turn into a daycare and start charging my family's \$200 to \$300 dollars a week, I

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will lose that financial support from those people who believe in the good work that we do. Additionally, funders want to know that we're serving many children. If I reduce the number of children I serve to 40, we're going to lose that funding, and, so, again it would impact our budget and our ability. So, Waterbury very much could face the unfortunate circumstance of having to close. And there are other clubs in the state who have said it's a possibility for them. So, you're talking about impacting, you know, a city and these working parents. Parents would have to choose - do I work or do I pay what I can't afford.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): So, these students -- so, basically the exemption, it provides you with the ability of providing childcare. But that's not what you offer, correct? You offer more than just childcare. You provide, I'm assuming, after-school programs for these children, homework assistance, and other things. [inaudible-06:05:16] the number of students that you service. Now, my question is where does the revenue come from? You don't get anything from Care 4 Kids, for example?

KAREN SENICH: No, our parents pay \$115 dollars when they sign a child up, and that's all we ask of them. And I don't have the percentages. We get some money from the State of Connecticut through various funding sources. We get money from corporations who have grants. We get some money from private foundations, and then the rest of our money comes from individuals. And, for example, we have a huge benefit coming up next week. But, again, if we then turn into a daycare, that support may dry up.

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REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): Yes, because as I hear you speak, it becomes more clear to me that you don't provide childcare at all.

KAREN SENICH: No, we don't.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): [Crosstalk] benefit, I guess, of restrictions of having so many children in one facility and having this exemption is what allows you to provide the services that you do. I guess that's what I'm trying to get at.

KAREN SENICH: Yes, it does. What we have, it allows us to provide the services we do to our families.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): Okay, and then you'd have to meet the ratio requirements or the physical location's requirement that licensing might require you to do. Okay, thank you for those answers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Okay. Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): I'll go very quickly. Just thank you for your testimony and for all the great work that the Boys and Girls Clubs do throughout the state, and I think we're all on the same page that we want safety and protection and we want to offer that to as many families as we can. So, we recognize the great work. I do have one specific question. So, if you were to discover an incident of abuse or neglect or somebody, so you report to -- aside from the Boys and Girls Clubs, do you have an agency that you would report to?

KAREN SENICH: We do. We're mandatory reported, and we are all -- everybody on my staff is trained as a

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mandatory reporter. And, so we would report to DCF, and we would report to the Waterbury Police Department, and then we would report to the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. So, we report, as expected, of any kind of incident.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Well, I certainly hope after we hear all the testimony and we look at this, that we can find a solution that protects all of our children in the after-school programs. So, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Cook.

REP. COOK (65TH): Thank you, Senator. I just have a simple question. What age groups are we talking about here?

KAREN SENICH: We serve K through 12. We don't take children who aren't in kindergarten, and we don't take children who haven't attended school. So, they're coming to us after school; so, if a child hasn't gone to school, either because they're sick or they're just skipping, they don't have the privilege of coming to the Boy and Girls Clubs. We are truly after-school.

REP. COOK (65TH): Okay, so I might have one more question. So, you had mentioned that you do get some state assistance. Does that fall under like Head Start, Even Start, or any of those, and what type of state assistance do you receive?

KAREN SENICH: We receive funding through the Judicial Department for youth violence prevention, and that substantial sum of money allows us to serve our teens and our middle school who are so vulnerable to negative influences, which is why it's so important that -- we feel it's so important that

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we continue to serve that demographic to keep them safe and on the right track.

REP. COOK (65TH): And is that the only state funding that you receive?

KAREN SENICH: We receive state funding through the Department of Education through the Connecticut Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs. So, all the clubs receive that, and that supports our educational programs among other programs that we all do.

REP. COOK (65TH): Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you. Thank you for being here. You know, I've heard from other -- I don't have a Boys Club and Girls Club in my community that I represent, but I have talked to a few, and you're not the first one that has told me they're concerned about being able to stay open. I just have to remark, you are so passionate and such an advocate, I think you've touched everybody here. Boy, your Boys Club is really lucky -- Boys and Girls Club -- really lucky to have you. And I'm sure there're a lot more like you in this world, but I'll tell you, yeah, I've been seeing the heads bobbing behind you. But, thank you, thank you for your commitment for our kids. I think Waterbury's very fortunate.

KAREN SENICH: Thank you. Just if you'll allow me this indulgence, so I am Waterbury born and bred, but I grew up on the other side of town and attended a different organization, but it has been there for 130 years. My grandfather served on that board in the 50s and 60s, and I actually was a commissioner for a former, former governor, and after that, I

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took over the Boys and Girls Club because every child needs an opportunity, and every family deserves the opportunity to get their children the best that they can do.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions? Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much for your caring. Sharon Tripp followed by Sam Gray.

SHARON TRIPP: First of all, I'd like to introduce my colleague, Kathy Evans. She's also a founder of our organization. She's going to help me out. Good afternoon, members of the Committee. I'm here to oppose Bill number 5216.

My name is Sharon Tripp, and I'm the Executive Direction of Organized Parents Make a Difference. OPMAD is a nonprofit agency that offers before and after-school academic enrichment programs in five of the Hartford Public Schools, serving 400 children each day until 6 p.m. Our agency serves low-income working parents who need dependable, trusted care for their children while they're at work. If these parents don't have access to affordable after-school programs, they can't work or their children are left unsupervised for hours.

Our agency is exempt from licensing. This is not a decision we made lightly, nor was it an easy option to get (presently the licensing regulations are the same for home daycares. I know you just heard all of this) serving five children, as they are for after-school programs serving 400 students in school buildings. Although the school building is deemed safe during the school day, apparently something metaphysical happens to the building at 3 p.m., and it becomes unsafe at 3:15. The building licensing requirements alone are impossible for an outside

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agency to follow. We can't change the school buildings.

The safety of our children is a major concern for our agency. We perform background checks of all employees and volunteers over 18 years of age. We have more than one staff member with children at all times. Our programs are monitored by Hartford Public Schools, the school staff, the State Department of Education, the Connecticut After-school Network, and the City of Hartford.

Therefore, in conclusion, if this bill passes and our agency had to apply for licensing, we may have to shut down. We would leave 400 students and their families with no care at all, as well as over 15 employees would lose their jobs. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions for OPMAD? Seeing none, I appreciate you and thanks for your patience. Sam Gray followed by Michael Suchopar from Bristol Boys and Girls Club.

SAM GRAY: Good afternoon, good afternoon, Co-Chairmen Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and all distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Sam Gray, and I'm the President and CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Hartford. Our club is a very special place. We take great pride as being the country's first Boys and Girls Club, founded in Hartford in 1860. We celebrate 160 years of service in our great community and in our great state. I'm also president of the Alliance, which is a group representing all Boys and Girls Clubs throughout the

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State of Connecticut, and as you see, a number of my colleagues are here in this room today.

Ultimately the safety and well-being of Hartford and Connecticut's youth is our top priority. We want to collaborate with state and the Office of Early Childhood to find solutions that provide the safest environment for our kids without leaving more of them unsupervised during after-school time. We support a cooperative and collaborative partnership and a dialogue around this issue. Collectively our impact is critical for the state. Every day over 109,000 kids and teens in Connecticut leave school with nowhere to go, and that's based on an Afterschool Alliance statistic. And we know that the time spent afterschool is critical for insuring that they have a positive future and don't go down the wrong path. The Alliance represents Connecticut's Boys and Girls Club that serves well over 87,000 kids and teens per year at 31 clubs around the state. Sixty-five percent of our club members are of minority races, 33 percent of them coming from single-parent households, and 40 percent qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.

Clubs serve a critical need in our community in addition to life-enhancing programs and building essential skills in young people so they can thrive after high school. We serve nearly 600,000 meals and snacks at no cost to families in 2018, ensuring that youth had a nutritious meal after school. There are 817 trained adult staff that work in Boys and Girls Clubs with more than 3000 volunteers that serve in our community.

Safety has been and continues to be a priority, the number one priority in Boys and Girls Clubs. We ask

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that the Committee continue to work with us to find the appropriate solution so that we can continue to serve the nearly 90,000 youth and families that depend on the Boys and Girls Club to guide and support the next generation. Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and, Sam, I publicly want to thank you for all the work you do with the Boys and Girls Clubs in the Hartford area and also now that you lead all the Boys Clubs in the State, and I just want to say I'm a product of the Boys and Girls Club back when it was just a Boys Club.

SAM GRAY: Back when it was just a Boys Club. And I and also say I was a Club kid myself; so, I've been associated with this organization ever since the age of eight. My three boys have all gone through the Boys and Girls Clubs.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Mine too, my one. Any questions or comment? Thank you. Thank you, thank you for your testimony. This from the Village; I'm not going to bash your last name. I probably bashed your first name, too.

THAIS ORTOLAZA: Hello, Co-Chairmen McCrory, Representative Sanchez who was here, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Thais Ortolaza. I am a Community Quality and Network Coordinator at the Village for Families and Children. I'm also a graduate student at the University of Connecticut, Master's in Social Work Policy Practice, and a parent in the community of Hartford. So, I come with three different perspectives.

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The Village partners with Hartford Public Schools to provide a safe and nurturing environment during out-of-school time. Currently the Village serves over 400 kids in our community this year alone at five different sites, and during the last three years, we've served over 3500 students. Our organization currently offers services that require licensing and oversight from state agencies including the Office of Early Childhood, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Public Health. The leadership and staff recognize the value of setting and maintaining high standards of quality and safety. Our voluntary engagement and accreditation is evidence of this.

Under-resourced communities should not be tied to unreasonable licensing requirements because it suggests that there should be different standards for different communities. We recognize the value of supporting partnerships between schools and community providers, especially in under-resourced communities because districts like Hartford, for example, don't have the resources to offer this type of programming on their own.

We would like you to consider revising the wording in the bill or adding a definition to the sections to strengthen the statute. As detailed in my written testimony, we think that this could be clarified by either adding a definition of "administered by a public school system," or changing the language in 1(a) from "administered" to something more specific. I've included suggestions in my testimony. Please consider this to help clarify the requirement for nonprofits. Thank you.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? We forgot a person from the Green Team. Hadia, come on up, from the Green Machine Team, followed by Joanne from Solar Youth.

HADIA AFZAAL: Distinguished members of the Council, thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Hadia Afzaal. I am a junior at the Academy of Science and Innovation in New Britain, and I believe we need a bill to ensure every student is taught about climate change. Climate change is a problem that everyone needs to be aware of, especially our youth.

Not enough students know about climate change, and even less have received lessons about it. When I was in middle school, I was never taught about climate change. My knowledge of the topic came from personal research and initiative to take extra courses to learn about the issue. In middle school, students are taught about language arts, mathematics, social studies, and basic sciences. These are mandatory classes that all students must take, but climate change is hardly even brought up as an elective. This leaves students uneducated about the problems that we are facing in society as a whole.

Students should be taught about the problem and aware of the ill effects that it is causing our planet. We make our students study the arts, culinary practices, and physical fitness, yet we leave out the most important skill they must know -- how to properly take care of our planet. It is no lie that we are in a world where the climate is only getting worse due to pollution, mining, and

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fracking. Most students don't know what any of these terms mean. I was lucky enough that I saw the signs and was able to put myself in a position where I could get the information I needed by taking extra courses and signing up for early college experience courses. However, most students don't get this option.

Classes in high school are difficult with the push to take AP courses, do well on the SATs, and mandatory classes they must take such as chemistry and world history. There is a desire to learn more about the issue, but the opportunity is not present. Many schools do not have any classes to discuss climate and leaves students to search on their own to find any type of opportunity to learn more about the topic, which is difficult for a child to find on their own. And without that education, students are unaware about the harm they are causing our environment and make choices that hurt us all.

You can go outside and see students littering, constantly buying single-use plastic water bottles, and not knowing how to properly recycle. We need this bill requiring all public schools to teach students about climate change. With this bill, we can establish a better education system that will benefit us for the future and change the lives of the students who will now have the opportunity to learn more about the planet that they inhabit. This bill will change everything. Please make the conscientious choice when it comes to changing our education system so we can still have a chance to save our planet. Thank you.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your strong testimony. Any questions from the Green? Representative Gibson.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Good afternoon, Hadia. How are you?

HADIA AFZAAL: I'm good, thank you.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): So, in middle school, you said it wasn't part of your middle school curriculum, right?

HADIA AFZAAL: No, sir.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): You did a great job today. I'm very proud of you, and keep up the good work.

HADIA AFZAAL: Thank you, sir. It's nice seeing you again.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): You too. Thank you, Mr. Chair. A former student.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. [Laughter]. Thank you. Joanne.

JOANNE SCIULLI: Hello. My name is Joanne Sciulli. I'm the founder and Executive Director for Solar Youth which is a youth development organization in New Haven. The irony of today is that 30 years ago I was a student climate activist, but that is not why I am here to talk to you today. Quickly, I am here in opposition of H.B. 5216. I think the Boys and Girls Club directors have given a good context of why it's not a good idea.

I thought I'd tell you a little bit answering a question that I heard earlier which is why did the exemptions exist, in a story which is that in 2008, on April 4, we received a knock on our door. Solar

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Youth's office is actually a five-bedroom apartment unit located in a public housing development. It was somebody from the Department of Public Health. They were there to inspect us as a daycare. This was the first time that I had ever heard, after running the organization for eight years, anything about this. At the conclusion of that meeting, we were given a notice of illegal child daycare operation for each of the locations where we operated. We were told to cease and desist and possibly receive a \$100 dollar fine for every day that we continued to operate, including the day since we founded. We obviously did not cease and desist. That would have been an incredible hardship for the dozens of families that we were serving at the time. What I did do, though, is then launch into a year and a half of an enormous amount of work trying to figure out a solution.

What I learned is that in 2007 when there was a big daycare regulation overhaul, there were three words in the exemption clause that were removed - "community youth programs." As a result of removing those three words, every youth organization in the State of Connecticut suddenly became a child daycare center, and an illegally operating child daycare center. So, for the next year, and none of us knew about this because none of us followed daycare regulations because we were not daycares.

So, for the next year, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what to do that would allow us to continue to exist. I met with representatives from the Department of Health to learn more about the regulations and to see if there was a feasible path for us to acquire a license. I learned that we do share the same goals which is the health, safety,

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and welfare of Connecticut's children. But I also learned that some of the regulations made it absolutely infeasible to be licensed. As I said, many people have mentioned some of those already.

In addition to looking at licensing, I also worked hard to try to get other organizations to help advocate for changing the regulations so that we could be licensed in a reasonable way and continue to operate, but because there was fear of being seen as an illegal daycare, nobody wanted to raise their voice. So, in the end what happened literally at the eleventh hour is that our wonderful New Haven delegation helped get an exemption put into the regulation, and, so, that is why Solar Youth is listed as being exempt from the daycare regulation.

In conclusion, the one thing I would add is that we are very much for looking at a great solution with the OEC; however, let's fix the regulations before we take out the exemptions.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and more so, thank you for the explanation on how we got here, because I know we're here, but no one told us -- I've been here since 10 o'clock -- explained to us how we got to this point, but thank you for your explanation. I'm sure we're going to figure this out. I appreciate it. Any other questions?
Representative Candelaria.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to thank you for coming and also providing that explanation because I was trying to wrap my head around it also. So, thank you for that. And I think that as we continue to discuss this as a Committee, I think there're a lot of things we have to look at. Because, in reality, you're not a

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daycare at all. You're providing probably similar services, but you're not, from what I'm hearing. So, I think this is a discussion that we need to continue to have amongst ourselves and ensure that at the end of the day, we protect all children, if that is to continue with the exemption. So, thank you so much.

JOANNE SCIULLI: Sure, and the analogy that I've had is that, you know, picture a camel and picture a giraffe. They're both beautiful amazing animals, but you cannot put a camel costume on a giraffe. We both have four legs, we both have necks, right? But we're not the same animal; so, let's look at regulations that actually address who we are as unique entities.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Lorraine Gibbons from Cardinal Sheehan and then Brian Cohen.

LORRAINE GIBBONS: Good afternoon, Senator, Representative, and the rest of the members of the Education Committee. My name is Lorraine Gibbons, and I'm the Executive Director of the Cardinal Shehan Center in Bridgeport as well as the McGivney Community Center in Bridgeport. I've submitted my written testimony in opposition of the House Bill 5216 - AN ACT ELIMINATING THE LICENSURE EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING CHILDCARE SERVICES.

And, so, you've heard from my colleagues today in great depth, but I'll just summarize that we are an after-school program provider in Bridgeport, and pretty much this licensing would really threaten our ability to provide essential after-school programs and deprive the neediest young people of valuable learning and social opportunities after school. We

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object to the categorization of these programs as childcare necessitating daycare licensing and removal of the Cardinal Shehan Center exemption, Subsection 11 of Section 19a-77 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Both the McGivney Community Center and the Cardinal Shehan Center have been providing after-school programs effectively and safely for years and for generations. We have received the widespread support of the community in terms of donors, our volunteers, and have benefited entire families by enabling parents to work while their children are cared for in structured and supervised learning and recreational environments.

The proposed changes in regulation would really add unnecessary financial and administrative burdens onto our organizations and to our families, and they would have to look elsewhere for services. Most importantly, they would deny proven and safe programs for at-risk and vulnerable young children who lack the opportunities that are crucial to their health and welfare and for the entire community.

So, in summary, you're heard in terms of safety, we do provide background checks on all of our employees. We are mandated reporters like the Boys and Girls Club. We also report to the Diocese of Bridgeport and, you know, background checks, as well. Our building for the Cardinal Shehan Center, we have a 55,000 square foot facility, outdoor basketball courts, tennis courts, playground for kids, and we make sure that our fire marshal and security systems are in place, and our families really look to come to the Shehan Center and the McGivney Community Center, first for safety. So, we

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value safety. Safety is of paramount importance to us, and, so, I'm here to oppose raised Bill 5216.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony, and thank you for your patience. Any questions?

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you. I'll go very fast. So, I's just to thank you for your testimony and particularly for outlining -- because I was unfamiliar with some of the really the programs and activities that your, the Cardinal Shehan and McGivney, excellent programs. So, again, I've said it before, but I hope we're going to be able to find a solution. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Brian Cohen followed by Merrill Gay from the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance.

BRIAN COHEN: Good afternoon, Committee members and everybody else who's still here. My name is Brian Cohen. I'm from Chaplin, Connecticut. I'm here in support of parts of 5216, specifically the inspections. It doesn't make any sense to me why an after-school program or a day program should be exempt from being checked in on by the State.

I, in my past, have been a mandated reporter, five times regarding one individual that's got a hospital, a place that's now closed. Two before the death of Andrew McClain, which is coming up on the anniversary, March 22, and three after I resigned. The one right before the death of Andrew McClain happened one month. The mandated reporter's statement said, "Placed in danger by the R.N." Unfortunately, the state was slow, and the kid was dead. Okay? Unfortunately, the administrator kept

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doing the same stuff in a different bag, and I quit and resigned. I didn't want to be part of this anymore.

Unfortunately, another patient died, and my co-workers came to me and asked me to stand up. So, I had three more mandated reporters. The third one, the nursing supervisor went to this administrator and was told to do it anyway. A lot of people would just go along to keep their job, and that's part of the problem. Finally, on the exact three-year anniversary of the kid's death, the Hartford Courant reported on one of my substantiated allegations, and the individual was finally removed. It made national news; it was a big deal.

Seven months later, this administrator showed up at Lake Grove in Durham. That place was also closed down, investigated by the Feds and DPH, DCF, and this one is the 85-page report by Blumenthal's Connecticut Attorney General's Office. The child advocate Jean Milstein came to basically your body and repeatedly talked about this investigation of this abuse, neglect, lies, and cronyism.

Long story short, in conclusion, right when this place was getting ready to close, this administrator was hired without a search to lead the Boys and Girls Club. Okay? Hired without a search to lead the Boys and Girls Club. In the public statement, it said that he left this place after helping it recover from the death of the boy when he was removed. Now, all I can say is that there's no reason, daycare or after-school, that the state should not be allowed to inspect these programs. From my understanding, it was like once a year. I don't see what the problem would be with that.

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The other wording that may be a little problematic is the childcare situation puts these people in a financial bind, and that should be worked out, but there's no reason why these places shouldn't be inspected from time to time, especially since I know what it's like to be a mandated reporter. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you for your testimony. And I appreciate it actually because there is no simple solution, but if we bring all the individuals who are working on this together, I also believe that, yes, inspections should take place; I absolutely agree. But clearly there's some differentiation between what a childcare facility for babies and kids and a Boys and Girls Club or -- there's definitely a differentiation, but we're going to figure it out. I guarantee it. I'm an educator, I'm a mandated reporter, I've seen it myself, and I know what you're talking about how people will actually turn their heads. They have; I've seen it. Yeah, yeah, exactly. But we're here to make sure our children are safe, and we're going to pass policies to make sure we take care of one end of that spectrum to the other end of the spectrum. That's my position, and that's what we're going to figure out at the end of the day. So, I appreciate your coming up here and being forth and being honest about what's happening, and thanks for your patience, also. Any questions? Thank you. All right. Merrill Gay followed by Elizabeth Fraser.

MERRILL GAY: Good evening, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty, members of the Committee. My name is Merrill Gay. I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early

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Childhood Alliance. I've submitted written testimony on three bills, in support of three bills, House Bill 5213, the childcare incubator bill. You passed this last year; please pass it again and get it onto the Senate. House Bill 5222 that would provide a 90-day job search period under the Care 4 Kids program for families living in homeless shelters. My written testimony explains why this isn't as expensive as you might have figured from the Commissioner's testimony. We are talking about 527 kids last year under age five. If you gave them a half-time certificate for 90 days, it's the equivalent of giving 66 kids a certificate; that's a rounding error within the case load.

I want to spend most of my time talking about House Bill 5220 and draw your attention if you're looking at my testimony to the map that is in there on the fourth page, which shows that Connecticut and Delaware are the only two states in the country that don't allow a parent to use the childcare subsidy program while in school. And, so, you will see after that chart, after that map, and that's an interactive -- there's a link to an interactive map, as well, in the testimony. But there's then a chart that shows you by each different category of things how we stack up against the other New England States. So, five of our neighboring New England states allow a parent to use the child care subsidy while in a job training program. Four of them allow you to use it while you're in the adult ed. program. Four of them allow you to use it while you're in a certificate program; say, you're going to a manufacturing certificate program. And four of them allow you to use it in an associate's degree program, three in a bachelor's program.

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So, the question is why do we continue to put Connecticut at a disadvantage in addressing our workforce shortages by not allowing parents to use this needed support to be able to get the training they need to fill jobs that are empty. And, you know, this bill is not as extensive as the one you had before you last year. It recognizes that this is a short budget year, and it hones it in on a couple of shortage areas. There's a small piece for the Even Start program which is a comprehensive two-generation approach in adult ed. that deals with both the parents and the child. And then as far as workforce, it looks at advanced manufacturing, nursing, and education prep, particularly I see that as playing a role in the early educator program, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): You can continue because I do have some questions, but I want you to finish off.

MERRILL GAY: So, I think one thing to remember in this is that Connecticut will be getting another \$4.1 million dollars in Federal CCDBG grant funds. So, to think about, you know, are we going to -- you know, do we want to experiment a little here and see what would happen if we provided a childcare subsidy for parents who were going through the advanced manufacturing training program? Or parents who were going through a nursing program? Do we have a better graduation rate?

You know, when you think about the amount of money that is spent in state dollars in essentially providing an affordable nursing care education. You know, there's a good bit of state subsidy in the community college nursing program. For every student who goes through a year or a year and a half

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of that and then drops out because they just can't handle balancing work and childcare and school, that's subsidy that has essentially been wasted. What we're proposing here is to use the childcare subsidy to provide a little bit more support to those families who are trying to get their way through a training program that will then give them a job that pays enough that they can support themselves.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Thank you, Merrill. And absolutely, and looking at this bill, we are focusing on those areas on Early Start and manufacturing jobs and so forth. So, I know that earlier the Commissioner was here to testify, and we asked her about the Care 4 Kids expansion, and she said that if we were to expand it to all students, of course, it would be somewhere between \$38 million to \$40 million dollars. I mean, some of those numbers are a little too high, but I don't think she's focusing on this specific group.

MERRILL GAY: What she gave you was the number that came a couple years ago when we talked about opening it up to everybody through a bachelor's degree. So, it's apples and oranges.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Right, and what estimate do you think we're talking about if we just expand it to students in, like, education, you know, going even for certification? What number do you think we're talking about?

MERRILL GAY: I haven't had a chance to calculate those numbers. You know, we don't have that many students who are in those programs. If you look at home many of those students have kids, the numbers sort of -- you ratchet down. Okay, there aren't

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that many in the program, and then of those who are in the program, there aren't that many who have children of the right age, and there aren't that many who don't have another person in the household who could watch the kids while the student is in school. So all the other factors that go into Care 4 Kids eligibility, you know, you can't have another adult who could watch the kids at home and still get the subsidy. So, you would ratchet down the amount of people who are covered pretty substantially, but it would enable, you know, that single Mom with two kids who's trying to put herself through nursing school the support she needs to be able to make it.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Exactly. I wanted you to touch up also on the Incubator Program from last year's [inaudible-06:44:25] bill just to, you know, maybe answer a few questions -- why the specific cities were chosen for this pilot program and also what do you think this pilot program would cost?

MERRILL GAY: Okay, so this came out of project in New Britain where they were looking at the fact that we only have enough licensed infant-toddler care for nine out of every 100 children. It's one of the worst situations in the state, and they were trying to figure out how do we increase that capacity. None of the center-based providers wanted to add infant-toddler capacity because they lose money on it. So, we were looking at what's the other alternative. Well, home daycare.

Well, we know that we have families who are interested in starting home daycares, but they haven't ever run a home daycare business, and many of them live in apartments where they couldn't get it licenses. So, they're looking for another

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alternative. Folks at the New Britain Y said, "What if we did a business incubator model?" So that was where the idea came from. They pitched it at a Harvard sort-of Shark Tank type idea concept and won a prize to do it. What they're asking for in this bill is permission to do it. Because what is childcare licensing? You're either a home daycare, or you're a center. There's nothing in between. What they want to be able to do is to license room in a business incubator at that's a home daycare. It's not actually in a home, but it's going to be run like a home daycare with one person who is the owner-operator, who's taking care of a maximum of six kids. Two of them would be infants, and then the rest would be preschool or after-school-age kids.

And, so, the idea is to have a nonprofit that would provide the support to make it possible for those new businesses to grow and flourish. We don't envision this as something that's going to involve state money at all. This would be nonprofits going out and raising money from foundations to get these things up and running. And why did we pick those five communities? We picked those five communities because there were nonprofits that were interested in actually pursuing this because we weren't envisioning that there was going to be a lot of state money to go make it happen.

You needed to have motivated groups who had some interest and some knowledge of how to do this to make it work. So, in Hartford, it's the Hartford YWCA which happens to have a director who organized family childcare networks for the military. In the New Haven and Fairfield County areas, it's All Our Kin which has for 20 years now helped people start

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home daycare businesses, and in New Britain, it's the New Britain YWCA.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And I believe in New Britain, they do have a facility.

MERRILL GAY: I think they've got a facility that they're thinking about they would use.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Okay. Thank you. Any questions?

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, and welcome. It's always excellent to receive your charts, and it really help us visualize what's going on with the Care 4 Kids. I particularly am hoping that we can expand to look at the Even Start program. I know we've seen the positive results that have come out to that limited program with the adult education. So, I just want to compliment you for advocating for expanding that. That makes sense, and those are already individuals proving that they're trying to increase their employment, and it makes sense to me.

I also am pleased to look for the expansion to try and meet our workforce needs as we're going forward, particularly down in Southeastern Connecticut, but I think here on this Committee we can see and be very positive about what we would like to see happen. But as we know, the reality of it is looking at where the resources will come from. Is there anything prohibiting that \$4.1 million that you mentioned that we would be an increase to the budget? Can those funds, some of those, be used in these programs?

MERRILL GAY: Yes, absolutely. That \$4.1 million dollars is childcare development block grant; that

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money is all used for the Care 4 Kids program. So, that additional \$4.1 million dollars would be available for expanding Care 4 Kids.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay, thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony, Merrill. Elizabeth Fraser.

ELIZABETH FRASER: Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Elizabeth Fraser. I'm the Policy Director for the Connecticut Association for Human Services. We strongly support expanding the eligibility for Care 4 Kids to include parents participating in Even Start programs or those enrolled in certain secondary education and training programs.

This step will increase the ability of low-income parents to support their children and will help to build a more educated workforce. As you heard, Connecticut is one of only two states that severely restricts access to Care 4 Kids subsidies for educational and training opportunities which have the potential to lift families out of poverty. In Connecticut, almost ten percent of the births each year are to mothers who have less than high school. An additional 20 percent of births to mothers are with mothers with only high school or an equivalency, and for these families, a path to prosperity is difficult at best.

The opportunity for full-time year-round employment with potential for growth is often not available without additional training or education. This provides little stability for parents and negatively

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affects children. Parental education strongly correlates with children's academic achievements. It correlates with employment and earnings potential for their children as they become adults. Children whose parents lack a high school diploma have also been found to have higher risk of health problems including being born with low birth weight, which for black children in this state is a problem. Additionally, this aggregated data tells a clear story that black and brown children are disproportionately affected by poverty, and more than 38 percent of these children live in a home where no parent has secure employment.

Juxtaposed to this is the need in Connecticut for a trained and educated workforce to attract business, fill jobs, and grow our economy. But to be part of this economy, those lacking educational credentials will need education and training necessary for employment, and for many this includes the ability to get childcare, and this is one of the most difficult barriers to overcome.

For those of you who don't know what Even Start is, I actually worked in an Even Start program for many years. It's adult education that provides adult education either to complete high school equivalency or to learn English, and it provides childcare in the same building often, and it's always an accredited early learning program. So, it's accredited childcare with adult education.

Additionally, parents need to participate also in a parenting class, peer learning, parents and children together which is a mentored time in the community then in the classroom, and a home visit every month.

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One last thing, this program had a study completed through the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis several years ago, which demonstrated that Even Start participants increased their average annual household income by 40 percent. And there are other pieces of information that Dr. Parr who conducted that report has submitted in testimony. Also, in my testimony which is not submitted yet, are some videos of some of the young Moms that are part of this program. I think the one that I have that we just took the other day is from Representative McCarty's district.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions from the Committee? Senator Lesser.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): Yes, thank you, Madam Chair, and it's good to see you chairing this committee; I don't think I've seen that before. And thank you, Liz, for your testimony. I do want to associate myself with remarks made earlier by Representative McCarty about the benefits of Even Start. I've certainly seen the work. I believe in a past life, you actually directed the Even Start program in Middletown.

ELIZABETH FRASER: I did do that in a past life. I don't think you ever stop doing that, really, I guess. Here I am.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): But, you know, I think it's really remarkable because it's an example. We talk a lot about 2Gen in this building, and this is an example of a two generational learning initiative that really works, and it's been proven and it has the data to back it up. So, I think it's really important.

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Could you talk a little bit more about how it would work in terms of making Care 4 Kids eligible, how that would work?

ELIZABETH FRASER: Sure. I think Care 4 Kids can be distributed in different ways, and in Connecticut we do it through subsidies to parents to give, you know, supports so that they can pay their childcare. You can also do it through contracting slots, and in that way -- and we haven't done that in Connecticut, and they're looking into it right now. But that is the way that we could provide for these programs, the childcare component, to support the programs because we know childcare is really expensive, and all of the past five percent cuts, ten percent cuts, took huge chunks out of their budget; so, they're really struggling right now. Several of them have gone from three classrooms down to one classroom. We'd like to rebuild that back up to the three, and we used to have 11 or 12 programs throughout the State of Connecticut, and we're down to three because of budget cuts, as well. So, we would like to build the program back up and give more opportunity to more of these young Moms and Dads. And it's Dads, too.

SENATOR LESSER (9TH): I think that's a really great point, and I wish it the best of luck, and thank you for your testimony.

ELIZABETH FRASER: You're welcome. Thank you.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Senator Lesser. Are there any other questions? Hearing none, we thank you. And the next person is Belinda Roche. Is Belinda here? No, well, well that will take us -- we'll move to -- Oh, Belinda is here; oh, good. Thank you.

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BELINDA ROCHE: Thank you, Education community members. My name is Belinda Roach. I support bill 5220 as a parent. I want to be support with childcare because it's hard for us being in the wheelchair paying for stuff, and to want to be, you know, being in college, work, and we have to pay for college. So, it's hard for us to be, you know, doing it all by ourselves because taking care of our own child. So, I want to be able to have going to college finished and doing what I'm supposed to have been doing. Also, I want my daughter to at least be with other kids learning and play with them as, you know, kids because since we have to pay for childcare and us being on one check is not supported. So, we need a little bit of help for that.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Belinda. You did a very nice job and made a very compelling case for us, and you have a beautiful daughter. Thank you so much for being here and your testimony. Are there any questions from the Education Committee? Representative MacLachlan.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you, Representative. Hi, Belinda, how are you?

BELINDA ROCHE: I'm doing good, and you?

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Good, good, thank you. Thank you for being here. What is your daughter's name?

BELINDA ROCHE: Katie.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Katie? Awesome. How old is she?

BELINDA ROCHE: She's three years old.

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REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): She's three years old. Awesome. Well, I really appreciate you guys taking the time to come up today to advocate for something that's so important to you and your family, and your testimony was very impactful, and you did a great job today. So, thank you.

BELINDA ROCHE: Thank you.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you. Any other comments? Hering none. Thank you again.

BELINDA ROCHE: You're welcome.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Okay. That will move us on to our next bill which is Bill Number 5213, I believe. It would be Eva Bermudez. Is Eva here? If not, Felicia Sandes. Oh, sorry, I keep doing that.

EVA BERMUDEZ: Hello, Representative, Committee of Education. My name is Eva Bermudez Zimmerman. I'm here on behalf of CSEA SEIU Child Care Union. I'm the Child Care Director for CSEA. CSEA has over 25,000 members throughout the State of Connecticut, and of that membership, we have over 4000 childcare providers and a few childcare centers. And 5222 and the bill that we're in support of give the ability for childcare expansion, and that basically enables parents to joint Even Start programs like Liz Fraser and Merrill Gay mentioned. We're also in support of Bill 5213; 5213 is an incubator bill that allows for providers to start their own business in a space that's then sanctioned a new incubator. It's a new idea.

Right now, childcare throughout the State of Connecticut has 50,000 kids that are not in licensed care, and we are looking at the childcare conversation as a reality where we should give more

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opportunities for parents nearby and local areas so that they don't have to go a massive amount of time between finding childcare, but they also should have accessibility that's near in proximity to them.

By doing the incubator bill and by also expanding Care 4 Kids to parents who are in workforce programs that allows not only for providers to have the ability to start their own business, but it allows the parents to have more access to childcare, more funding and then go to these programs and become educated and then become, you know, part of the workforce. So, on behalf of Care 4 Kids Child Care Union CSEA, I do hope that you do take into consideration supporting both legislations so that way the Care 4 Kids program has more opportunities for parents and for providers. And I'll take your questions.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Eva. Are there any questions from the Committee? Okay, I would just like to point out, thank you for mentioning 50,000 other children because we have all been talking about children and their care forgetting that we know of the children that are in the programs, but there are also 50,000 that we're still not serving.

EVA BERMUDEZ ZIMMERMAN: Last year's study with OEC, it's 50,000 children in the State of Connecticut that are not in registered care.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Right. Thank you very much for your work, and thank you for your testimony. That brings us to Felicia Sandez. She had to leave? Okay, thank you very much. That will take us to Bill 312 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS, and the first person is Virginia DeLong.

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VIRGINIA DELONG: Good afternoon, Representative McCarty and members of the Education Committee. My name is Virginia DeLong. I'm a school counselor in a middle school, and I am Chairman of the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee for the Connecticut School Counselor Association, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of our 1200 school counselors in the state.

Last year we were very fortunate to have the legislature pass Public Act 1963, and this adopted guidelines for comprehensive school counseling programs in our schools. This framework covers academic, career, and social-emotional areas for our counselors.

Today I want to talk about Senate Bill 312 which is talking about counselors being able to spend 80 percent of their time working on direct counseling services with students. They should be delivering developmentally appropriate school counseling curriculum in the classrooms. They should be providing short-term counseling through small group and individual and crisis counseling. They should be working on individual student planning such as components of the Student Success Plan which we require here in grades 6 through 12 in Connecticut. It should include collaborating with teachers, administrators, parents, families, consulting with outside agencies, working on tasks that directly benefit students, writing letters of recommendation, collecting data and analyzing that data to help students, and delivering school counseling parent programming. It should include any other duties that are in alignment with the Connecticut School Framework which we passed last year and are currently working on to roll out for July 1.

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It should not include testing duties and coordinating or proctoring tests. It should not include counselors having to do 504 duties such scheduling 504 meetings, writing 504 plans, mailing out invites to parents, following up to make sure that they'll be attending. It should not include administrative duties or other clerical duties that take away from school counselors doing their jobs. Other duties that should not happen are things that are not in alignment, again, with the Connecticut School Counseling Framework.

I really strongly feel that we set our school counselors up for failure in this state when we ask them to do things that are not their job. Last evening, I went to a CE event with Commissioner Cardona, and heard some very passionate teachers speak about the issues in their classrooms and how unsupported they feel, how kids need a lot of behavioral help. Their social and emotional needs are rising exponentially, and counselors are trained to help with those issues, but when we are tasked with doing jobs that we should not be doing, we cannot be available for those teachers to be a support.

I spoke with a counselor yesterday who has 230 seniors on her caseload. Two hundred and thirty seniors she is responsible for. Writing letters of recommendation for. Meeting with those students to help them with their post-secondary plans. Those meetings at minimum should be 30 minutes. I'm sure you can all do the math and how impossible of a task she has, and how unfair it is when people say she's not available.

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The last thing that I want to say about this piece is that it breaks my heart when I have to say to a student I'm not available because I'm being asked to do non-school counseling tasks, and then I have to go home at night and hope that nothing has happened to those kids because I can't do my job. And it's very frustrating, very frustrating for counselors in this state.

Aside from that, we need to be talking about school counselor ratios because it's not enough to say yes, you can have 80 percent of your time to work with students, when counselors have 230 students on their caseload or, in some cases, over 700 students on their caseload that they are expected to meet the needs of. We need to start fixing the problems in this state with education, and we need to start addressing them in real ways that make sense and stop putting Band-Aids on these issues if we want to truly help our students. And, in closing, all I would say is the latest statistic that breaks my heart is from the CDC, which you may have seen, that the rate of suicide among our kids from age 10 to 24 has risen 76 percent in the last 10 years. Thank you.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Virginia. Are there any questions from the Committee?
Representative Napoli.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Thank you very much. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your passion towards the subject. We greatly appreciate it. So, the bill calls for 80 percent of the requirement to be devoted for a school counselor. If you had to hypothesize, what percentage of time is given today

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between a counselor and a student or a group of students?

VIRGINIA DELONG: Like what it is right now?

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Yeah, if you had to hypothesize.

VIRGINIA DELONG: In the best school, probably maybe 70 to 75 percent, but probably in the majority of our schools, we're probably looking at more like 50 to 55 percent in some cases.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Okay, and then in your testimony, you talked about non-school counseling tasks. What are some of those?

VIRGINIA DELONG: We have school counselors who are in charge of administering testing and coordinating that testing; so, like AP testing in our high schools. AP testing can take two weeks' time just for the AP tests alone and then tack on another week for makeup testing. So, the school counselors are actually coordinating all that testing. They are working with College Board which our counselors have reported because there's been some change in AP testing this year. It has been an absolute nightmare for some schools in the glitches that have happened. So now you're talking about counselors being on the phone for hours with College Board trying to fix these errors, and that's time away from students. Sometimes our counselors, if they're not coordinating testing, are asked to proctor testing, and sometimes they're doing both of those things -- coordinating and proctoring testing.

I have been told of situations, and I will say I'm very fortunate to work in a school, plus, as you can see, I'm a pretty good advocate for myself, so I am

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fortunate that I don't run into this in my building. But I talk to a lot of counselors, and they're being asked to take on all the duties of 504s, which, you know, they have to be set up by somebody. You have to contact the parent to find a good time for the meeting. Then there's official paperwork that has to go out. Then some of them are asked to run the meetings, then fill out all the official paperwork from the meeting and creating the plans, distributing those to staff to make sure everybody knows what it is, and then in some cases managing the 504 with the student, which that can sometimes be appropriate, but all of those other tasks are clerical tasks that should be done by an administrative assistant.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Okay, and my last question is, you know, how would a school district or I guess school administrator -- how would they assess that 80 percent of the time is being reserved between counselors and students. What method would they use?

VIRGINIA DELONG: We have assessment tools that we use through the American School Counselor Association that are also going to be a part of our Connecticut framework. Just to clarify, the state does have a school counseling framework already. The last time it had been updated was 2008. I am actually on the Framework Writing Team with some of my colleagues. We're working with Kim Traverso at the State Department of Education, and we are actually in the process of having the final vetting so it can go to the State Board of Education for approval, and in that framework are assessments that can be done on how counselors are using their time. So we have tools available for that. There are also

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a lot of electronic programs out there that counselors can use to assess their time, as well. I can tell you that in Norwalk they just had a complete audit of their school counseling program done in the district, and one of the things that they found through that program because they had counselors track their time for a certain amount of time as part of the audit -- they were able to find through that that counselors were spending a lot of time doing non-counseling duties even though their ratios are below the recommended 1-to-250. Because they have so much of their time being used to do non-counseling tasks, now they still can't get to their students even though they have reasonable caseloads.

REP. NAPOLI (73RD): Again, thank you very much, and I appreciate it.

VIRGINIA DELONG: Thank you.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you. Representative Comey.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you very much, Chairman. Thank you so much for your passionate testimony and for helping our children and being there for them. I recently read a school nurse report that had surveyed all the school nurses that they could get to in the state, and it says that their number one issue that they were dealing with was the mental health issues with the children and that that was where their the majority of their time was going, and that was where their unmet needs were. I'm wondering -- you know, in your school, how you have to work together. And just can you tell me about that scenario at all because, you know, I haven't seen the data from this year, but I don't anticipate

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it getting any better, and maybe perhaps getting worse. Thank you.

VIRGINIA DELONG: Thank you for that. Yes, I would agree. My school nurse and I are like this. We work together all the time because often when you have students who have anxiety, they don't know they have anxiety, right? So anxiety can present itself in many different ways - stomachaches, headaches, just not feeling well. So, the first stop is often the nurse's office, and, so, we really work closely. We consider ourselves all support staff, right?

So, we work really closely with the school nurses because when those kids are coming down -- like, my school nurse, you know, maybe the first time, she'll be like, "Okay, let's make sure you don't have the stomach bug or the flu or something," but then when that kid starts to come to her office a second time, third time, right? Then she is on the phone to me and saying, "Can we have a conversation about student X here because I have concerns that there might be more going on with anxiety." So, then I go down to her office sometimes, or she'll send a student to me; we usually ask whatever the student's comfortable with. And then we'll have a conversation and chat, and usually when you start talking to the student, you can really assess whether or not that's anxiety, you know, or something else.

And, so I do feel like we have really close relationships with school nurses, also school social workers and school psychologists. We as school counselors are firm believers we need all of us in schools because we have different -- we have similar rolls, but we also have very different aspects of

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our job. So, it's not easy enough to say let's replace one with another.

So, I think all of us in conjunction with the school nurses are really trying to assess students and what their needs are, and I feel like on a daily basis it's "all hands on deck" because there just aren't enough of us, and there are times when if I'm not available, then I run down the list. "If Miss DeLong's not here today, then you can see, you know, Miss P. or Mrs. Scott, and if they're not here, then go see Mrs. Parker, the school nurse." So, she is a part of that team and trying to work with, you know, assessing students' needs but also helping to kind of triage at times and take care of them.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you. So, maybe I missed it, but can you -- the counselors are not in every school. I mean, I know that in my elementary school, we had the nurse and we had the social worker, and then they brought in someone else that worked across the school districts. And I'm just wondering if you could get down in that, if you haven't already?

VICTORIA DELONG: I didn't because I didn't have time. So, I absolutely can now, so thank you for asking that question. Yeah, only 25 percent of our elementary schools in Connecticut have school counselors, and of those 25 percent, a lot of our school counselors are between multiple buildings. So, their caseloads are often very high at the elementary level because they're servicing students in two or three elementary schools within their district. It is important that we have counselors K through 12, mostly so that we can have true comprehensive school counseling programs that are

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meeting the needs of kids right away. Because our program is meant to be preventative as much as possible. Certainly we are reactive when we have to be, and we triage things when we have to put out fires and stuff like that, but really our model is intended to be getting into classrooms; working with students starting in pre-K, you know, our kindergarten, and working with those students to teach them social and emotional skill that unfortunately are not always taught at home anymore; you know, working with kids on academic work to help them to be successful.

But the one thing that's really important for us in starting in elementary school is the career work. This is where we differ from school psychologists and social workers, is we are specifically trained to work with students on career work. And research has shown that kids discard careers, certain careers, by age nine. So, they say, "Yep, I don't want to be this," and sometimes that's without any knowledge of it; it's just saying they don't want to do it. So, it's really important for us to be getting in there and really talking to our students about what careers are available, how they match with their skills that they're developing, and we really see this as a win-win for the State because of the big push for workforce development, and we see ourselves as a huge part of that. And we often feel like we kind of get left out of that conversation, and people aren't realizing the work that school counselors can really do at that level, starting in elementary school.

Our middle schools, more of them have counselors, but there are some that are kind of sharing middle school counselors. Some middle school counselor

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caseloads can be really high. And our caseloads at the high school are probably the best out of any of the three, but I think that's traditionally because we used to be called guidance counselors and now we are school counselors. So, the idea is people just think of that as being at the high school level.

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you very much.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): I just want to thank you, Virginia, for your testimony, and thank you, Representative Comey. Thank you very much, and I'm very glad to see her two chairs back. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Representative McCarty, you did great. You weren't as bossy as some of the Chairmen, but I won't say [Laughter] Sorry, excuse me.

You know, I represent two small towns, and so much of what you said today. I mean, they used to come, and you'd hear about your really impoverished communities, you know, that were really struggling and didn't have services. We're hearing it all very now, and I know you know that. A couple years ago we were here with a bill about teachers being really attacked and beat up in school, and I think most of us couldn't believe it. We were here late at night, and teachers were showing up on crutches. We remember it. And we made some assumptions of what was causing it, and we were all wrong.

And it was really the beginning of what we're talking about now, these early grays with trauma with our kids, and I said to a parent in one of my schools, "How's the year going?" Small town, seems pretty carefree. She said, "So much better this

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year." It was September. So much better this year. I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Oh, it was terrible last year." She said, "It was horrible." This is K through 3rd grade. And, you know what, there is such a change, and the trauma that families are bringing into the children's lives is just in everybody; it's all over. And, boy, if we need special services now, this is the field we need them in to get our kids through this. It's just pretty remarkable the stories we're all hearing now. And to support our kids, the families, and, of course, the teachers, but they really need these support services. I totally agreed with everything you've said.

VIRGINIA DELONG: Yeah, I had heard some stuff myself and until last night when I heard teachers speak up at the CEA even with the Commissioner, I hadn't firsthand heard some of those stories. And it was really hard to not cry for some of these teachers and what they're going through, but the message I heard over and over was the lack of support. And I never heard once school counselors or school psychologists or social workers being blamed. They actually included us in the pool of people frustrated, but it certainly, you know, just to give you a quick example.

The other day, my school psychologist was tied up with testing because school psychologists are tasked with doing special education testing, and this time of the year is like crazy for them with that. So, she was not available to deal with a room that she's tasked with, with a lot of social and emotional behaviors. So, I was essentially on call, and my office is at one end of the building, and that room is at the other. I definitely got my steps in that

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day because I was called back and forth to help deal with issues that were going on in that classroom. And I'm fortunate I work in a smaller school district, probably similar to the communities you represent. And that day was a good day, I guess, for all the other issues that students were having.

But it just speaks to the fact that teachers need to have that support to be able to help their students to get through the day, and teachers need the emotional support, too. You know, some of my teachers joke to me like, "Can we put a couch in your office so that we can come in on our free periods and chat with you?" And I said, "No, because I'll never get you to leave," but I said I appreciate that you want to talk. But they definitely need that support just as much as our kids do, and it just really kind of breaks my heart that the number of kids with trauma and incredibly high adverse childhood experience scores - ACE scores - and there's just not enough of us to kind of work with those kids, identify what their needs are, and then get them the proper support and help that they need.

And, you know, really our job is about the school counseling services. It is not always about -- that's why I tried to explain some of the things that we should be doing because we do have some concerns with the language on this that we'd like to work with the Education Committee on amending slightly, just a couple tweaks to it. But we want to make sure that it's clear that we have a lot of tasks that need to get done and it's all about helping directly our students and not, you know, maybe helping out somebody get some clerical task done. So, thank you.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony.

VICTORIA DELONG: Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Wildaliz Bermudez.

WILDALIZ BERMUDEZ: Hi, good afternoon. Dear Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, and esteemed members of the Education Committee. My name is Wildaliz Bermudez. I'm a resident of Hartford, a councilman elected to the Hartford City Council, and, most importantly, I am a mother. I'm here today to speak in favor of H.B. 5213 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A PILOT PROGRAM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD BUSINESS INCUBATOR MODEL.

H.B. 5213 is a bill that would both nurture small businesses and expand access to affordable, quality childcare in our communities by allowing family childcare providers to establish their businesses in an incubator space. How can this innovative approach be accomplished? Fairly simple. Usually by partnering with public or private agencies, corporations, and organizations. So, in doing so, we are creating (1) more opportunity for childcare, and business to grow in a supportive and sustainable environment, (2) providing accessible childcare alternatives to families, (3) expanding the total number of childcare sites, and (4) for the first time, providing childcare during nontraditional hours in this new model.

So, I can personally vouch for this legislation as a working mother and elected official, and we need quality and affordable childcare, and it's of the most importance to me. Working Moms and working

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Dads have shown that we can be true superheroes juggling many responsibilities at once. Let's face it - the reality is that we need more options for childcare in our state. Also, for many parents like me, we don't have regular 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. jobs, which means that we desperately need to have childcare opportunities that fit the needs of our diverse growing workforce. A pilot program like this one would help with that.

And while I have been fortunate in the amount of help and support that I have received from family, managing time to raise my daughter has not been easy. I still find myself having to play a very delicate balancing game of time, arranging lots of competing schedules. When I think about the mothers and the fathers that are out there trying to raise their children on their own, I know that I must fight for those parents even harder than I fight for myself. I must also fight for the thousands out there who could become small business owners, providing excellent childcare. Right now, you could only become a childcare provider if you own your own home or establish a center.

So, this bill would definitely benefit a lot of people and would allow them to have access to the institutional supports so that their businesses can survive the challenges that come from working alone. The providers whose services I have used are some of the most compassionate and committed people I know, and they deserve the same care and commitment from us. I hope that you can get H.B. 5213 passed so that we can help our families, businesses, and increase the access to quality and affordable child care. I believe in the mission of this pilot program, and I am confident it will be successful in

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reducing barriers and costs to the quality of childcare in Connecticut.

I'm also in support of Bill H.B. 5220; this is to make sure that those individuals who are going back to school or get training, that they have access to Care 4 Kids, as well. And also in support of H.B. 5222 to make sure that those families who are homeless also have access to childcare subsidies. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you again. Did Belinda Roche get done? Okay, all right. Jennifer Parzych from CSCA. Jen, come on up, Jen.

JENNIFER PARZYCH: Thank you, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty, Senator Bethel, and esteemed members of the Education Committee. My name is Jennifer Parzych, and I am a school counselor educator at Southern Connecticut State University as well as a member of the Connecticut School Counselor Association's Government Relations Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 312 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS.

Last year, the Education Committee's favorable action on raised bill 956 led to legislation enacted - Public Act 1963 - in which the State Board of Education will work with the Connecticut School Counselor Association to adopt guidelines to support districts in implementing comprehensive school counseling programs for all students in the state. Thank you for your work in this legislation.

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A conversation about implementing a comprehensive school counseling program cannot be had without one that recognizes equity and access to school counselors as a significant challenge. It is imperative that we thoughtfully consider why all students might not be receiving services. One piece of the puzzle is that school counselors are often thwarted in their efforts when non-counseling activities are given to them, like testing coordinator, excessive clerical work in the absence of administrative assistants, substitute teaching, and the like.

This is true even of school counselors with the best intentions of implementing a comprehensive program. School counselors are uniquely qualified to deliver a comprehensive program through prevention and responsive services, but oftentimes this training is not aligned with the expectations of administrators. In order for the comprehensive program to be implemented effectively with its emphasis on meeting the academic, career, and social-emotional development needs of all students, it is essential that 80 percent of a school counselors work is in providing direct services with students, such as the curriculum delivery, individual advisement, and short-term counseling; and 20 percent of their time providing indirect services for student such as consultation with parents, school staff.

I've been actively involved in our research team in Connecticut over the past few years, studying the impact of school counseling and student outcomes. We're beginning to learn more from our qualitative analysis that a critical obstacle for school counselors in lower-performing schools, particularly, lies in their ability to implement the

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program given limited administrator understanding of their role. It should be noted that Connecticut has long held a comprehensive model aligned for more than 20 years -- I will wrap up quickly. But essentially it is really much of the role ambiguity stems from a continuation of established practices, traditions, and customary roles that have existed for more than 50 years. So, the role confusion is a challenge.

I'll wrap up with that. The rest of my testimony is available for you on line, but I do ask that you also consider amending the underlying bill to include the proposal to have the State Board of Education also adopt guidelines and recommendations for appropriate ratios and direct funding to school support staff. Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Okay. Curtis from CSCA followed by Kathleen Barrett from St. Joseph's.

CURTIS DARRAGH: Good evening. Thank you so much, Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, and esteemed members of the Education Committee. My name is Curtis Darragh IV, and I'm a school counselor at Westside Middle School Academy in the Danbury Public Schools and an active member on the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee for the Connecticut School Counselor Association.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in strong support for Senate Bill 312 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS. This bill states that a school counselor must devote at least 80 percent of his or her work during the regular school hours and provide direct services to students individually

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or in groups. This bill is important to me as a school counselor because I will be able to use this opportunity to provide direct services to students who have access to me. By providing these services, I will be able to go to classrooms to teach a social/emotional curriculum and meet the standards of my career that'll be going into place on July 1. Students will be able to be taught about various topics such as cybersafety, healthy friendships and relationships, to name a few, and become emotionally stable in social situations. Students will be able to learn and explore different trades and universities that I teach them about in our college and career unit. With the recent education bills that reference school counselors and what we are responsible for doing during the school day, this bill could help allow students and our caseloads have a better and complete access to a school counselor and the services we provide to educate them.

I currently do most of this work now as a middle school counselor; however, at times, it has been increasingly difficult to reach each and every single child with a caseload of 350 students. The American School Counselor Association has a recommended ratio of 250:1. My case load used to be that number. As Danbury continues to be a growing city and a growing school district, my school has expanded and so has my caseload. Next school year, Westside Middle School Academy will have only two school counselors, myself included, with 375 students each. My partner and I try our hardest to build relationships with our students and know their names, their families, and all their backgrounds. I used to pride myself with knowing all 250 names because in this career

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every child who gets put on my caseload should feel welcome, respected, safe, and have a trusted adult to go to in the building, and I should know who they are when they come through my door. One hundred students later through the years, that has been increasingly difficult to maintain, to not only know their families and their names and their life situations, but to reach out and educate every single child.

I'm asking that you consider adding to the legislation a maximum ratio of 250:1. No school counselor and no student should ever go through their educational career without knowing each other. My biggest fear in this career is if I ever miss something, and I ask myself every day how one person can be responsible for 350 students and their families when it comes to students' academics, social/emotional learning, and college and career readiness. With adolescent mental health and suicidal ideation on the rise in the past couple years, my fear continues to grow, as I would never want to be in a position of "I could've and I should've" or even to say, "I never knew that student." I would ask that you amend the underlying bill to include Connecticut School Counselor Association proposal and to also have the State Board of Education adopt the guidelines and recommendations that are appropriate for school-counselor-to-student ratios and to have increase to student support services. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Thank you, Curtis.

CURTIS DARRAGH: Thank you so much.

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SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Kiley Gosselin from the Partnership for Strong Communities. And Shaunette Marquis from Christian Community Action. I'm sorry, I'm totally sorry. C'mon. And then you follow.

KATHLEEN BARRETT: Thank you. Good afternoon, Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, and esteemed members of the Education Committee. My name is Kathleen Barrett, and I'm a school counseling professor at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford. I've been a professor doing this work for 15 years now, and prior to becoming a counseling professor, I was an elementary school counselor. And, so, I appreciate personally the critical role that school counselors play in the development of children.

You've heard our colleagues talk about Senate Bill 312 and the important gains that it would offer school counselors in our state in being able to truly effectively serve the children in their school communities. It proposes to do this by specifying more clearly both the nature of their duties and the number of counselors that schools should have to have a ratio that will allow the counselor's job to be most effectively performed.

But I can tell you that in my work as a professor, one of the classes that I teach often every year, a couple of times a year, is one that supervises students who are out-placed in different schools in the state. So that I may have seven students and one at an urban high school and one at a suburban elementary school, and so on. But the difference that I see in the way that school departments work and how effectively they can reach kids and especially how able they are to do their job in

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prevention that my colleagues talked about, to help lay the foundations for healthy child development starting in the earliest years - healthy child development in personal social areas, in academic areas, and especially in career areas. The role of a school counselor is so important, and so much less able to be accomplished than -- is that actually me?

Excuse me, let me summarize, let me summarize very quickly and say, I hope you'll lend your support to this bill and help school counselors be able to better serve kids in our state, and I hope you'll consider amending it to make it possible for all of our schools to have elementary counselors. Twenty-four other states in the country legislate elementary counselors in schools, and we don't, and we need them. So, thank you so much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? We're counseled out.

SHAUNETTE JAMES-MARQUIS: Good evening, everyone. Distinguished guests, Senators, Representatives, Good evening. My name is Shaunette James-Marquis, and I come before you as a family coach at Christian Community Family Shelter in New Haven, Connecticut. I do not come with numbers for you today. What I come with is the real story of families that are in need for Care 4 Kids that will determine whether they go to work or not or will determine if they get out of shelter and to be sustained for the rest of their lives.

I've been in this field for 18 years, and I've seen where Care 4 Kids not being able to be given to families have them not being able to get a job, their staying in shelter longer, which costs the

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government more, and families having to be giving up their jobs so that they can stay home and babysit their kids because there're not enough daycare services in New Haven for them to do so. At present, I have a Mom coming in shelter with two full-time jobs. Since her enrolment in shelter, she was fired from one and is on the verge of losing the other one because she has no daycare for her children.

So, I'm here today to ask you guys to look into the Bill 5222 and see what can be done to accommodate these homeless parents who are seeking affordable and available daycare for their children. Also, the color for hope is yellow, and I bring these yellow shoes today. And the color for support is orange, and I bring these socks because the socks are needed to go in the shoes. And the support comes from you guys, and the shoes come from my families, and in order for them to walk safely and securely, they need your support to be in their shoes so that they can walk and become the people that they need to be in this society. Please, I'm asking you, to revisit this bill and see what you can do to help these families. Thank you so much, and I'll take your questions if you have any.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Wow, she said it for me. Any questions? Thank you for your testimony. Jane Bielefield from the Connecticut Camping Organization followed by John from the Connecticut Alliance of YWCAs, John Cattelan.

JANE BIELEFIELD: Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. I am here to represent the Connecticut Camping Association as well as the Girl Scouts of Connecticut. We certainly support Bill

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5336 in terms of comprehensive background checks. We do not think that fingerprints are necessary of the members of the Connecticut Camping Association. All of us are doing background checks, or nearly all of us, and at least 75 percent of the camps in Connecticut absolutely do; what we can't speak for are those one-week fly-by-night camps that come in, do their thing, and leave, and there is very little to oversee and to be able to tell what they do.

In terms of Girl Scouts, we use a company that does background checks very thoroughly and very comprehensively. The information that they get, they get back instantaneously unless there's something that is found for that particular person, and then they'll get a message that says, "You'll have your report within 24 hours," and anything that's flagged comes in at that point. They then can follow up with that individual and find out what's going on. They also can go back to the agency that's done that background check and find out the information that has been flagged.

We know that 4-H, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Y camps, anybody who's accredited by the American Camping Association -- and that's quite a few camps in Connecticut -- we all perform background checks. We certainly want the kids at our camps to be safe. That's not what we're arguing here. We're saying that fingerprinting all of our staff is absolutely a nightmare. Girl Scouts of Connecticut employs 180 camp staff with the process taking three to four months to get results, two to three months; it doesn't matter. We often are hiring our staff within a week of them needing to start their jobs. This bill is asking for them to have their

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background checks in place, their fingerprints completed and in place. [Warning bell, laughter]

In conclusion, we are certainly looking to support comprehensive background checks. We just don't think that fingerprinting is the way to go.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any questions?

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for staying so long. I know you folks have been here, I think we're going on our eighth hour, starting eight hours. So, but thank you. All-important bills. Do you know what you pay now for a background check?

JANE BIELEFIELD: It is in the realm of five to six dollars per person. Five to six dollars, plus the drug testing which we do is another \$13.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Okay, so \$18 dollars. When you change to this what's being proposed, what would it cost you per --

JANE BIELEFIELD: Eighty-eight dollars per person for a total of \$14,000 dollars for Girl Scouts alone.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): So, it's going to go from \$18 -- and now, when you're talking about these numbers, these are Girl Scout numbers.

JANE BIELEFIELD: These are specifically Girl Scout numbers. There are 16,000 camp staff in Connecticut. If you're looking at a time span that's going to be two to three months to get things completed, that's not -- we're going to put camping out of business.

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REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): And do you know how that \$88 dollars happens? I mean, is this a third party, and that's what they're charging -- \$88 dollars?

JANE BIELEFIELD: When I had to have my fingerprints done because I worked in after-school programming before this, I had to -- it went into the State of Connecticut, and I'm not sure exactly. I had to pay my agency.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Excuse me; could you say that again?

JANE BIELEFIELD: I had to pay the agency that I worked for to reimburse them to submit them to the State of Connecticut. So, I'm not sure where exactly it went.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): But I mean if you're paying for background checks, you pay the company that's doing them?

JANE BIELEFIELD: Right now, we pay the company that performs our background checks.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): So, there's no money sent to the State of Connecticut [Crosstalk]

JANE BIELEFIELD: Not right now, there is not.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): And is there something proposed that it's going to change?

JANE BIELEFIELD: Yeah, they're looking to charge us \$88 dollars per person to have fingerprinting done.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): And that fee would go to the State of Connecticut, and then they'd pay for whoever did it?

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JANE BIELEFIELD: Right, yeah. In researching this, in looking at all the other states around us and across the country, the typical fee is between \$15 and \$40 dollars per person, not \$88.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Unbelievable. All right. Thank you, thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Cook.

REP. COOK (65TH): Thank you, Senator. I'd like to just respond a little bit to Representative Kokoruda's question. So, I had my fingerprints done to be able to teach pre-school, and it was \$30, and I had to do it at my local police department. So, I paid them directly. And I know, though, that the State has been on a backlog of three to four months. I don't know where they are currently, but I know that we were at a lag of fingerprinting. Our teachers were having problems getting their fingerprints just to substitute. But, Jane, thank you for being here, and thank you for all the great work that you've done for Girl Scouts over the many, many years, and I'm glad that you're back.

So, I have a couple of questions regarding this. What does it cost to go to Girl Scout camp per camper, give or take?

JANE BIELEFIELD: Yeah, our day camp programs are about \$200 dollars. Our resident camp programs run about \$800.

REP. COOK (65TH): So then, for you all to be able to pay staff and to pay for -- because that's obviously an all-inclusive camp. You said it was \$14,000?

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JANE BIELEFIELD: It would be \$14,000 dollars for Girl Scouts of Connecticut alone to fingerprint the 180 camp staff that we hire every summer.

REP. COOK (65TH): And the age range of those camp counselors?

JANE BIELEFIELD: They're all over 18, so we don't hire staff under 18 anymore.

REP. COOK (65TH): And the background check that you work with currently, I would assume that that company that you're working with has been approved by some organization out there that deems it safe enough that those background checks are reliable.

JANE BIELEFIELD: Yeah, it's through -- we've worked with the Girl Scouts of the USA, and this is certainly a recognized company.

REP. COOK (65TH): And have there ever been problems in the past with Girl Scout counselors that have been hired without fingerprints?

JANE BIELEFIELD: In terms of our background checks? No, not that I'm aware of, and I've been in camping for over 30 years.

REP. COOK (65TH): Me, too. So, thank you. Thank you so much, and thank you for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Any other questions?

REP. COMEY (102ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just say that as a Girl Scout's volunteer, you have one of the most rigid "volunteer" management programs that we see in these days, and I thank you as a parent of a, you know, a child who's been a scout. We as volunteers and as just people in the

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room have to go through stringent background checks; so, I just want to thank you for that. Sometimes it's a pain in the neck, but we appreciate that work.

JANE BIELEFIELD: But it does keep our kids safe, and that's really the ultimate goal.

REP. COMEY (102ND): That's my point; thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony. John Cattelan followed by Denise Learned.

JOHN CATTELAN: Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening. My name is John Cattelan. I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. While we support the concept of House Bill 5219 - AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH CAMPS, we do have some concerns.

I would like to state that the Y Camps already do everything required of background checks with the exception of fingerprinting. We support the addition of fingerprinting as long as it applies to everyone and can be done in a timely fashion. I just want to make the members of the Committee aware of some of the concerns we have.

The question is will the FBI background checks be processed in an adequate amount of time. The Office of Early Childhood is currently taking six to eight weeks to conduct background checks for childcare staff. In addition, many of our staff don't arrive to our camps until the day or week before camp begins. There needs to be a provision in this bill that allows camp staff to work while the background

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check is being conducted, and that our camps will not be cited for not being in compliance.

I'd also throw out the question of what about our camp staff that are coming from foreign countries? The Y has over 150 international camp counselors every summer. For us to pay the \$88 dollar fee to have them undergo a background check in the United States is a poor use of funds and a waste of money. They already have to be cleared by the United States State Department which issues them a J-1 visa.

I would also add all camps should be required to conduct background checks on their camp staff. Unlicensed municipal camps should not be exempt. Do we only value protecting the children who attend private or nonprofit camps and not the children who attend an unlicensed municipal camp?

I would just add this is a very expensive proposal. As was stated before, there is not a state around us in the United States charging more than \$40 for background checks, and we're going to pay \$88 dollars. This is going to cost the Connecticut YMCAs a quarter of a million dollars, and that's a lot of kids that won't be able to go to camp this summer.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for the testimony. Any questions? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just very quickly, you mentioned the delay in time in background checks. What is the average time that we're talking about?

JOHN CATTELAN: I talked to a number of my Early Childcare staff that, you know, Early Childcare

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staff directors, and they currently say to me that it is taking at least six to eight weeks to get the background checks cleared, and once they are cleared they're not even notified. So, they don't even know if the background check went through.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you. Good evening, John. Let me just ask you this. John, the \$88 dollars you said that is really over double what most states are, but are most states including -- because that \$88 includes the fingerprinting now, right?

JOHN CATTELAN: Right, correct.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Now when we do the comparison of the states, are we comparing apples to apples.

JOHN CATTELAN: Some are, some aren't. I mean, every state is having trouble, you know, complying with this. I'll be quite honest with you. My concern is that only a few years ago it was around \$20 to \$30 dollars to conduct a background check, and now it's \$88 dollars which means that \$40 to \$50 dollars is going into the General Fund and being used for, you know, other budgetary items. And Commissioner said that this morning when she testified on this bill.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I think a lot of us missed that, the fact that these fees to these camps was actually supplementing the General Fund. I certainly missed that point. I'm very surprised

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actually. I thought it was strictly just a pay for service.

JOHN CATTELAN: Commissioner Bye said that this morning, as well.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): And just quickly, you know, I wouldn't mind them, you know, charging that extra money if that money went to Care 4 Kids or some other programs. I mean, but it's going into the General Fund?

JOHN CATTELAN: Yeah, that's my understanding, and that's what the Commissioner said this morning, and I said to someone out in the hall -- I think one of the members of this Committee -- Mike, you know if that \$50 was going to be used for teacher training or used for Care 4 Kids or whatever, I'm sure we wouldn't mind spending it as much, obviously. But if it's just going into the General Fund, I don't think that's a proper use of those funds. And like I said, a quarter of a million dollars. That's just the YMCA Camps. That's how much this is going to cost us.

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): Great. And how about raising some of the salaries for these poor pre-school teachers?

JOHN CATTELAN: Yeah [Laughter]

REP. SANCHEZ (25TH): I'm sorry, Noreen, I cut you off. Okay.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, thank you. You know I think we have to remind, every camp doesn't have Care 4 Kids, and I think we had that discussion this morning, but every camp does, that I know of,

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offer scholarships. And to think that scholarships used to offered, and that's what would have to be cut back, I think. You're still going to have to pay your teachers. You're still going to have to pay for your Workmen's Comp and your liability insurance and your food and your buses or whatever. You going to have to pay for all that. And right away, the line item you look at is such an important one, and I know you don't want to do that, but that's where I'm afraid is where this money is going to be taken from.

JOHN CATTELAN: Yeah, and obviously I think the whole point of this bill is about childhood safety, and I'd say that is the main purpose of our camps, you know, to protect children, where parents have a safe place to send their kids. But obviously, if kids are unable to attend camp because we have to cut back on scholarships because we can't cut our staff, nor do we want to because we're by our, you know, accreditation with the American Camping Association or through the state, have to maintain certain ratios. So, we do not have the option of cutting staff or reducing staff hours to reduce our expenditures.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Just one more thing. When you keep talking about -- I know the bill excludes the municipal camps, and obviously I was very involved with my beach and recreational locally for many years; so, I'm very cautious of what I say. But the fact is it just doesn't make sense that you would take one group out and exclude them. I just don't understand, and I don't know if state programs would be, too, but if this is a safety issue, this is a safety issue. And I was really surprised to see that part in the bill.

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JOHN CATTELAN: I mean, I think -- obviously, part of it's about fairness, but, you know, my children have attended both Y Camps and both municipal camps in the Town of West Hartford, and I have to be honest with you, I've seen some things at the West Hartford camps that, you know, wouldn't really be allowed at, you know, one of our Y Camps, and I think it's just totally inappropriate.

And the other issue here is -- I think this was mentioned before -- by doing the background checks, we catch -- I think we reject one percent of the applicants because they underwent the background check. Because they're not applying for the jobs with us because they know they can't get the job with the Y. But they know they can go get a job in a municipal camp if they're not undergoing a background check.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Representative Cook.

REP. COOK (65TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. John, nice to see you. I kind of want to take a pause with what you just said in the accusations on municipal camps. And just let me finish. So, I had kids what worked in municipal camps. These camps traditionally, unless other camps ran differently than the municipal camps that I know about, only hire kids from their town. They are high school kids, usually somewhere in the age range of 15 or 16 to 18. I've driven my daughter to camp more times than I can count and not because she was attending but because she was working. So, I'm trying to understand.

I do think that there is a little bit of difference between a municipal camp and a Y Camp or a Girl Scout Camp when we're talking about the extensive

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amount of background checks. And the reason why I say that is this. Those are our local kids. If you have a local kid that is in trouble -- we're not hiring adults to work these camps. We're hiring high school kids. Unlike what we're talking about with Girl Scout Camps and Y Camps, traditionally. We're talking about putting a burden on a local municipal camp that, in fact, could, in essence, put a lot of these camps out of business. And a lot of these kids can't afford to go anywhere else but their local municipal camp. So, we're talking about throwing a camp under the bus.

I think we need to really take caution and pause on what we say and accusations that fly because those local camps, I think, keep kids off the streets, and our young adults that are in high school are peer-mentors to those kids. And, so, I would rather us still continue to look at that option of exclusion for them, not including them, because I don't want to see these camps go out of business, especially because most of these families can't afford a \$200 or an \$800 or a \$1000 dollar camp. And I think that the municipal camps bring something more to the table. I think if we're talking about people eighteen and older, that's a different conversation, but if we're talking about hiring kids that local from our local high schools at our local camps, that's a totally different conversation. I think they bring value and merit to this conversation. Thank you.

JOHN CATTELAN: I would just add that the bill only requires background checks for 18 and older, which we support.

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REP. COOK (65TH): But, you started with the local camps or the local municipal camps, and I just needed to go on record as [Crosstalk]

JOHN CATTELAN: Correct. Look, and I would say that we know that there're good and bad actors everywhere. I know there're a lot of outstanding municipal camps, and, I mean, I'd feel safe sending my kid to the West Hartford camps, my children. And I know there're are a lot of good ones, but there're are a lot that are -- it's not the municipal camps as much. It's the fly-by-night camps that were mentioned earlier that are going through the municipality to set up these week-long camps that are sports specialist camps, and that's what I'm worried about.

REP. COOK (65TH): Well, I think that that would be a different conversation that doesn't necessarily fall under the line of a municipal camp like we would have. So, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Wait, we have one more question. Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I just want to add, and Representative Cook, I totally agree, and I actually think that was not your intention. I heard it too, and I was surprised. It was not his intention. I think most municipalities do background checks for everybody. I mean, I know mine does, and I think mine's pretty typical. So, I don't think this is unusual. I think what I was really talking about was taking it to the next step with the fingerprinting. That's what I was really talking about. And I'm thinking if we feel it's that important, it should be important for everybody.

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But, these fly-by camps, that definitely is an issue. I would assume they have to have a location, and if they use -- in my town, if you use a field or a place, they're going to expect -- I'm almost sure they're going to expect some background checks or some proof that it's a well-run operation. But, thank you, John.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you, John

JOHN CATTELAN: Thank you, Senator.

DENISE LEARNED: Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Denise Learned. I'm the Executive Director of Camp Hazen YMCA in Chester, and I'm also a member of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs and the Connecticut Camping Association.

We are in support of H.B. 5219 and yet do have some concerns that you're heard outlined by both Jane and John before me. At Camp Hazen YMCA, we believe that a statutory requirement for youth camps for complete comprehensive background checks on all staff is a necessary step to ensuring our children's safety. I'm concerned with, however, some of the logistics and the specific methods that are outlined in the bill at this time, specifically fingerprinting.

As we look at the seasonal -- and I do have written testimony -- I'm not going to go through it all because a lot of it has just been covered. Right now, we do background checks on all of our staff, as do, I believe, all good camps in the State of Connecticut at this time. We do use a third party. We are doing background checks including Social Security trace, criminal conviction checks, state

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and national sex offender searches, and we believe that the results that we're getting are accurate, they're dependable, and they're the same results that are sought in this bill at this time.

In addition to that, we have about 50 to 60 staff on our staff each summer who come from outside of the US and around the globe. What I would love to see with this bill is that it also addresses those staff members. They do need to have a criminal background check certificate from their home country to get a J-1 Visa for the program, but since most have not been in this State and many have not been in the country before, as John had mentioned, to have them go through a US background check at this time would be \$88 dollars that wouldn't yield any results that would be beneficial at this time.

I do also want to address the time that it's taking for fingerprinting right now. The seasonal nature of our business just doesn't allow for that. We have people literally coming into the country two days before they start work, and to have fingerprints that have to be done in the state wouldn't happen or coming from across the country, as well.

To summarize, right now there are 31 states in this country that require criminal background checks for staff for youth camps, only 31. I think we should at least be number 32. Only one state, however, in the country requires fingerprinting be a part of that comprehensive background check, and I think it's because of our seasonal nature and we haven't found a way to do it and do it well. I'm hopeful that Connecticut will require comprehensive background checks for all camps including municipal

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camps because our kids are our kids, and they all need to be kept safe. But I hope that we don't require fingerprinting until it can be done both quickly and affordably. So, if you have any questions.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Yes, I do. Thanks for your testimony. Representative MacLachlan.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Learned, for being here. It's really good to see you again. It was good to join you and the members of Camp Hazen last week at your annual meeting. I think the last time I was in that dining room I was a 12-year-old trying to raid the kitchen to steal Hershey chocolate bars.

DENISE LEARNED: Which you don't do anymore.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): No, no. I assure you I've changed my ways, and I've cleaned up my act. I'm on my best behavior today. I wanted to thank you for your testimony and for the time that you spent being here today. And, you know, I was wondering, you know, how many -- I know your family's been deeply involved in the Y for a number of years. How far back does your family's involvement in Camp Hazen go?

DENISE LEARNED: My Dad was a counselor in the 50s. He was a teacher and a school administrator; so, he was on the summer staff. In the 70s, I joined the staff in '79 on the summer staff. I came into my current role as Executive Director in '99; so, a couple years.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Wow, it's such a rich history. How many campers do you think Hazen has had during that time?

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DENISE LEARNED: You know, we average about 1200 different campers each summer. We are in our Centennial Year. So, what is that -- 120,000, right? But, yes, so about 1200, mostly from the States each summer.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): And one of the most interesting parts of the annual meeting was learning about the amount of resources that are put aside for sponsoring campers. Could you help us understand the amount of effort that goes into making the Y experience available?

DENISE LEARNED: Absolutely. For Camp Hazen YMCA, and Camp is getting expensive, and we realize that all families have different abilities to pay, our goal is to ensure that every child can come to Camp Hazen or can go to camp. Last year, we provided about \$375,000 dollars in financial assistance to families and anticipate to do more than that this year, as well, and that was to about 800 children last year. Some received a little, some received pretty much all of their fees.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): And that's one of the things in your testimony and just learning more about this issue that stuck out. Having just visited and kind of learning about how many kids get to go to camp because of generosity of so many donors.

DENISE LEARNED: Absolutely.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Is this a fee increase from \$35 dollars a person to around \$88 dollars a person -- is that a material increase for [Crosstalk]

DENISE LEARNED: Oh, absolutely. And the \$35 dollars is -- right now, that's about average for

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what we're paying. I want to find out how the Girl Scouts do it for \$6 dollars, but we pay about \$35 dollars per out staff for the criminal background checks that we do. So, to more than double that, the dollars are going to have to come from somewhere. Most likely, it will be from the financial assistance that we would be able to provide to kids and families.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you. I had one other question because you guys were getting into some of the logistics of how you run the operation, particularly addressing capital needs and onboarding staff, particularly the international staff. I don't fully understand how the timing of these background checks would impact your onboarding process. Could you help me understand that a little?

DENISE LEARNED: Sure. I can tell you that right now, once we hire a staff member, we start the process. So, we can put it through the third party that we work with and make that happen. It's about a 24-hour maximum turn-around time for us to get that back. If it's an international staff member, once they are hired, they have to, before they can get their Visa, provide a background check from their home country. The way it would work now is that our staff members would need to go mostly through the State Police here in Connecticut to have their fingerprints, and then those would be turned in, and then the background checks would follow. Our issue is that our people aren't here until right when they're starting work. They live and work with us for 9, 10, and 11 weeks. To have to be here eight weeks before then just isn't feasible in order

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to be there, to have the fingerprints done, and to wait for the checks to come back.

And as John Cattelan had mentioned, in the childcare world right now, there not even hearing that a background check has been cleared. They're hearing that it hasn't been cleared or that there's an issue whether it's smudged fingerprints or those kind of things, but they're not getting the word. An, so, if we have to wait until somebody has been cleared before they can start but yet don't know when that is, we're not sure how that's going to happen. And I know OEC is working on their timeframe in this. I just don't see how they're so difficult with childcare staff that are year-round, and we're going to have 16,000 people that within a two-week period of time have to have this done for licensed youth camps across the state. I think that's going to be -- I don't think any of us can see how that can happen.

REP. MACLACHLAN (35TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Learned, and it was certainly a joy to participate and a privilege to be a camper, and I hope we can figure out a way to make sure that camps like Hazen can continue to be generous to those who aren't as privileged to attend, by working with you guys and your financial needs and what works and what doesn't work. Thank you very much for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Any other questions? Thank you. Kelly Willard. Okay, Sarah Raskin.

SARAH RASKIN: Good evening, Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, and member of the Education Committee. I'm here to support H.B. 5217

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establishing a working group to study school start times. My name is Sarah Raskin. I'm a professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Trinity College and a licensed clinical neuropsychologist. As you heard earlier, the AMA, the CDC, the APA, and the American Academy of Pediatrics have all issued statements suggesting middle and high school start after 8:30 due to the overwhelming scientific evidence that school start times impact the health and safety of our children. This is because teens are physiologically unable to fall asleep before around 11 p.m., require around nine hours of sleep, and, thus, waking them up at 6 or 7 in the morning leads to chronic sleep deprivation.

We care about nutrition in our schools. We care about exercise. Why do we not care about adequate sleep? We should not be enforcing sleep deprivation in our children. And, in fact, there's now an impressive body of research on the effects of later bell times. This includes increases in graduation rates; reductions in tardiness and missed school days; reductions in mental health complaints including depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide; reduction in impulsive behaviors; reduction in car accidents; reduction in sports injuries; and some evidence of improved test scores and academic performance.

Recent studies have indicated a couple important things. First, students see an increase in time spent sleeping. In other words, they don't just go to bed later. Grades improved, attendance improved, but most importantly, these improvements were the greatest for the high schools with the greater number of economically disadvantaged students and students of color.

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I had two children who attended school in Connecticut. One was a morning lark, loved to get up early, have a bagel, and watch an episode of Parks and Recreation. The other was a night owl who had to set four alarms and be dragged out of bed. Don't let anybody tell you that good parenting can counteract physiology. I was the same parent in both cases.

In conclusion, I just want to say that I'm in favor of the study bill but that I would like to suggest that in the work group there be a psychologist, a sleep medicine doctor, some people who have some expertise in interpreting the myriad of data that's out there because the people you have listed now in the study group would have to become scientific experts as part of being on the study group, and it just would be helpful to have a psychologist and a physician on board.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Thank you again. Rachel Kuhn followed by Kim Debaria.

RACHEL KUHN: Okay, first let me say I have so much respect for you after staying in this room for like eight hours. Okay, so good afternoon. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here and speak. I come before you today asking you to support Bill 5221 which probably no one has talked about. I will bring it up later why. It's the bill regarding research on the public education system in Connecticut.

So, my name is Rachel Kuhn, and I'm an MSW student at UConn with a concentration in policy practice. When I started my graduate degree, I did not enjoy research. I remember the painful memories of my

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psychology undergrad days and the challenging nights trying to figure out statistics. Not long after returning to school, my opinion changed. I learned about the importance of making informed policy decisions because of the unexpected consequences that accompany every action or change. Programs and policies rooted in the best of intentions can result in millions of wasted dollars and even damage to vulnerable communities while days pass and people remain blind.

That is why research is important. Evaluation, analysis, and discussion are all critical pieces in assessment. As budgets get tighter and priorities are chosen, research can be easily overlooked. I don't want the research of Connecticut Public Schools to be overlooked. The research of the specific institution is especially important to me. It is commonly known that one's childhood creates the foundation for the future and can dictate the direction of a person's adult life. A critical part of a child's life is their educational environment and the experience they have at school. Connecticut boasts of some of the best schools in the entire country, but this proud accomplishment isn't a reality for many.

The flawed funding designs that back our public schools support systemic oppression and generalization poverty. Education is projected as stairway to success, but the quality of that education significantly varies. It is no secret that the wealth inequality the state is monumental. This inequality is expectedly reflected in Connecticut schools. A certain level of difference in quality anywhere is expected, but the spectrum here so wide that it borders on embarrassing. I

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don't say that to insult the State of Connecticut. As a product of their public education system, I'm proud to be there. I'll wrap it up.

So, basically, we're encouraged a lot to testify on bills, and I was told many times, "Oh, that's a dumbie bill, you're wasting your time to basically testify on it, which kind of made me more upset and it made me want to testify on it more because they made it seem like it was just a bill, you know, so that something could get changed later and put into it, and I think that research of such a large and critical in one of the valued institutions in our country should definitely be studied. Another thing was I was trying to figure out if this research was already being done, and this was a continuance, and I couldn't find any previous research which made me think that it was not being done, and, so, if anyone can correct me on any of those things, that's great, also. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Listen; I want to thank you for sitting here for eight hours and speaking your piece. Now do you have a specific question that I will try to ask or we will try to ask about?

RACHEL KUHN: No, I just didn't know if I was embarrassing myself by basically requesting something that's already happening or requesting something that wasn't a real proposal.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): No, so I respect anybody who comes up here from the public, who comes up here to advocate for any issue, especially around education. So, feel free to come up and ask. Yes, this is more of a concept, and when we get towards the end, if there's something that we didn't cover during the session, during these hearings, and we need to put

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it in there, that's what we do. So, if you have a concept or some other issue that you want to express to us, just shoot it out there. I'm going to give you another minute. What's your main concern?

RACHEL KUHN: Well, my main concern is the difference in public schools. I grew up in Groton and had a really great education. I went to AP classes and now spending the last seven years of my life in New London, Connecticut, you just see how two that are very close in proximity, the people who live there are very similar, we're kind of all a community, but the education is very different. And because the backgrounds of the people living in those two places are already experiencing the intersectionality of different oppressive institutions and environments, it's especially disabling, I guess, for communities, and it's happening in pockets all over Connecticut, and we're actually one of the worst in the states in this regard, and we're one of the few states who actually continues to fund public schools in the way that we do. And I hope that -- I know this is not an easy fix in any regard, and to give the buy-in from all of the different socioeconomic groups and all the different perspectives and stuff that we have in our beautiful state is not going to be easy, but I think if we start looking in the direction of changing the way we fund public schools, it would be really important and beneficial to Connecticut as a whole because, you know, the saying like as the water rises, all the boats rise, as well.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Well, I hope one day you take all that energy and all that knowledge and the change you want to see made to run for office.

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RACHEL KUHN: I have thought about it. Today did not help, but --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): No, no, no, no, no. We're not always here for ten hours, but we need more voices like yours from your community to come up here and explain to people because we live in a very complex state where we have extreme wealth and extreme poverty. We have extreme opportunity and a lack of opportunity for people who live right next door from each other. We understand that; we get it. We do our best to try to change it, and we need to hear voices like yours. Voices like yours don't often come here.

RACHEL KUHN: Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Do you understand what I'm saying? So, I appreciate you, and next time, bring friend. Thank you. Any questions? Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I also agree with the Chairman that you did an excellent job advocating, but I wondered were you here earlier today when the Commissioner spoke?

RACHEL KUHN: Yeah, about the --

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): The framework?

RACHEL KUHN: Yeah.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Yeah, because I think that will touch quite a bit on what you're advocating for. So, we'll be looking at getting a complete framework of where all the districts are, looking at all the disparities, and gathering that information. So, it goes along with what you are saying and advocating for tonight.

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RACHEL KUHN: Thank you. I will look further into that. Thanks.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Wait, one more. You have woke this place up.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just really quick. I just want to thank you for your enthusiasm and wish you the best of luck as you complete your master's and agree with Senator McCrory - I hope to see you up here someday.

RACHEL KUHN: Thank you so much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Kim Laberia. Is Kim here? So, no Kim. So, Reverend Ernestine Holloway.

REVEREND HOLLOWAY: I should say good afternoon, Senator McCrory and everybody here. Sorry I can't see that well. I had an allergic reaction to a hand sanitizer. So I can't really see you all. But thank you for staying this late. I do want to talk about concerning the water. I live in Meriden; the water's really bad. You can't drink it. Okay, I guess the way you're all looking at me, you all know it's there.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Hold up. This is a question about water, because this is the Education Committee.

REVEREND HOLLOWAY: Yeah, I'm going to --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): You're going to tie it in? Okay, go ahead. You've got two minutes.

REVEREND HOLLOWAY: Clean water is important for our children to drink. In order for them to get a good night's sleep, they need water. For their bodies to

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function, they need water. They're going to school, and he can't drink the water, it's a problem. And Meriden has had water issues. You know, they compound our water with chlorine, and you can't drink chlorine; well, you shouldn't anyway. So, we got a bunch of kids in Meriden that are going to school, drinking this nasty water or not drinking it at all. So, you know in order to sleep, to function, your body needs water. So, somebody said how does it tie into education? I said, well, you got a dehydrated kids and they're eating all that candy and they're going to school on doughnuts, you to a big issue. You know, some people don't see it as being important, but I do.

You know, I also want to talk about things that are going on in education. I'm not happy. I'm not happy with the deal with Dalio. I'm not happy with Common Core. It's that are we in line with the Federal Government because we're not. I know for a fact that we're not. Are we going to get fined because of it? Our children are not reading and writing, and it ain't just in Meriden; it's across the board. So, you tell that young lady that she can run for office, but if we got kids that can't read and write, and it's not a disparity of where you live. It's just that we did something with education that we shouldn't have done. When you went to school, you had reading, writing, and arithmetic. And it works because it worked because we're all here, but we instituted -- and I'm going to finish -- we instituted with Common Core, and it didn't work. We bought into the Kool-Aid and took the money and realized it didn't work, and our kids are suffering because of it. So, let's line up. ESSA is dead. Let's fix it.

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And the Dalió deal just sucks. We don't know what's going on. You turned over all our rights to these people, and guess what? We don't know what's going on. You gave them all this money, and it's not transparency. So, please fix this so our kids can go to school and learn and be our future senators, and they can stay here all night.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Going once, going twice. Thank you, Reverend. Next up we have Anne Manusky, c'mon up.

ANNE MANUSKY: Good evening, Chairman McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Vice-Chair McCarty, ranking member Berthel, and members of the Education Committee. I'm testifying on several bills in regard to H.B. 5221 - AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT. I've put in information about Common Core. H.B. 173 - AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION ISSUES, again in regard to Common Core. I'll start with that.

It's come to my attention that much of the current process of the Connecticut General Assembly usurps the rights of the people of Connecticut. In fact, that in suggested bills are often subjugated due to many suggested issue that we want for the best for our state in the future. Great concerns exist in public education. One major issue has been the elephant in the living room, as one can see that neither the State Board of Education nor the Commissioner of Education, [inaudible-08:28:14] provide in testimony Common Core.

Common Core has been a disastrous plague to our education system since 2012, and yet, all these entities are rearranging the deck chairs; nothing

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done to remedy this problem. In the past several months, I've attended State Board of Education monthly meetings, and in public comment, provided the question to the Federal Education plan - Every Student Succeeds Act which expired November 30 of 2019. Where does that leave us? No answer. Additionally, the US Department of Education has a plan put forth in October of 2019 referred to as Ed-Flex, a plan for states to have flexibility in improving our public education. Again, Betsy DeVos, the US Secretary of Education, has said, "Common Core is dead." It's up to the states to fix our education systems. Florida, I don't know if you know, has gone forward for the state to actually have a plan. Tennessee and Georgia are also working on that. So, we need to do that in Connecticut.

I'm hopeful that the Education Committee will take serious thought to the situation of our public system. Common Core needs to be removed and a remedy to allow local school districts control of their education system - control which existed before Common Core standards. I will brief. Otherwise --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): So at this point, I will ask you to please summarize 'cause that bell went on.

ANNE MANUSKY: Sure. So that's the point on that bill. This is in opposition for SEL teacher programming. So, just to let you know, a lot of my testimony is the same. Dr. Karen Effrem and Jane Robbins worked in regard to putting a study together in 2018 in regard to SEL - Social-emotional learning - which is -- I believe it's titled *The Nanny State*. I have included in my testimony a link to that. The Pioneer Institute finds multiple negative effects of

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SEL on K-12 education, and teaching a child how to think and feel. This impedes a natural growth of the children, letting them live and grow as they will under God. Read Dr. Effrem and Attorney Robbins' work, and please vote against teacher programming.

One last thing that I'll use to summarize is this book that I had -- I don't think I even introduced myself. We were talking about my name. I'm with the Connecticut Republican Assembly, and I also am a child advocate for State of Connecticut, and I am the Connecticut Coordinator for Child Abuse in the Classroom, advocating to remove data. So, back in the '80s when I was in graduate school, this book, *The Hurried Child*, details how pushing curriculum onto children who are not ready for school -- this is Common Core. This is why we have more mental health problems in the State of Connecticut, and I'll leave it on that one.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. I appreciate your testimony. Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you. It's not my practice to disagree with anyone that comes forward. We're here to listen to you and certainly appreciate your perspective, but I would tell you that we -- I'm speaking for myself right now -- that social-emotional learning is an area that I think we absolutely have to look at in the state to help our children. We have one in four children coming into the classrooms now that are experiencing trauma, and I think it's -- we heard from the school counselors earlier, and we have a taskforce in place looking at where we can go with this initiative. The rate of suicide -- so, we're not saying with social-

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emotional learning, we're not telling students how to think. That's not part of the initiative of the social-emotional learning collaborative, and I am a Republican. So, thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any other questions or comments.

ANNE MANUSKY: May I just respond? Thank you, fellow Republican, and thank you for that. I'm a former counselor; so, I believe in working in small groups and working with children who definitely need issues. This seems like socialism and telling children and telling people how to think and feel, and also collecting the data. Thank you.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): All right. Next up we have Morgan Lloyd followed by Maria LaRusso.

MORGAN LLOYD: Hello.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): How are you doing today?

MORGAN LLOYD: I am happy to be sitting here. My name is Morgan Lloyd, and before I start, I know that everybody wants to go home, but I just want to say. So, I and a wonderful team of co-workers run a nonprofit organization which is an after-school program for kids in a low-income-housing community in Boston --

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Boston?

MORGAN LLOYD: The Boston area, and it's really, really exciting to me to see people here for ten hours talking about children's well-being. And they're really important to me; so, seeing that adult, like real live adults, continue to do that is really exciting. So, thank you for that.

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Also, my written testimony is going to be way nicer than the summarization. So, I would encourage you to take a look at that, and I will be as brief as possible. So, I am here in favor of House Bill 5217 with the hopeful ultimate goal of moving school start times later in the state. So, you've heard a lot about circadian rhythms, natural sleep cycle numbers, stats, and stuff, but I would like to come from the perspective of a student who went to West Hartford Public Schools for my entire life and had 180 of these morning every year.

So, I'm basically just going to tell you in a paragraph what it feels like to wake up at whatever hour you wake up. You're up before the sun, and the streetlights are still on outside. There are no cars on the road, no neighbors walking their dogs yet. It's eerily silent, and somehow every morning you find yourself wondering, however irrationally, if maybe this time you actually are the only one left in the world, and it never seems to get easier. Waking up in that emptiness is one of the loneliest experiences I've ever had. I have a long and ongoing tumultuous history with mental illness. The first memory I have of true, hopeless, aimless sadness and depression were on these mornings when you wake up and it's dark, and you do truly wonder if nobody else is going to wake up today. And it's weirdly impactful and surprisingly impactful, and I think it's something that everything is harder and sadder and darker when you're tired or depressed, for that matter, and I wish I was just being dramatic, but this really is the reality of so many kids today.

And, yeah, I think, in conclusion, you have to understand that we want to learn and we want to be

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good students, but it's really hard when you have to pay for it with 180 mornings each year of this cold, dark loneliness. So, I would love it if we could wake up when we're supposed to and to natural light and evidence that other humans are there with us, and just one hour is enough.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony, your brave testimony. Any questions or comments. Seeing none. All right. Maria followed by Kelly Weber

MARIA LARUSSO: Hi, I'm Maria LaRusso. I am a professor of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Connecticut. I'm here to speak in support of later school start times. My main concern is that we're currently facing a mental health crisis in our children. A 2018 survey found that 70 percent of teens reported anxiety and depression to be a major problem among teens in their community. Schools are increasingly overwhelmed by the rising behavioral and emotional problems among students. A 2018 national survey of principals found that for the first time, addressing the needs of students with emotional problems was rated as their number one concern - well above other issues such as student poverty, instructional practices, and teacher effectiveness.

In 2015 an emotion study was conducted by Yale with 22,000 high schools students from across the US. Researchers gave a questionnaire that asked, "How do you currently feel in school?" The number one answer was "tired" followed by "stressed." Schools are often attempting to address students' emotional needs with various programs and services, but the results are often inconsistent, weak, and sometimes

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there are no effects at all. The reason for this is that some programs, in fact, do not work, but more often it's a matter of poor or inconsistent implementation.

Programs are very difficult to implement well. Later school start times is the one change that we can make that bypasses all of the implementation challenges of school-based programs and interventions. You don't lose any time in the classroom or the school for implementing programs. There's no training needed, no background knowledge or skills required, no materials to buy and maintain, and perhaps most importantly, no additional stress on teachers by adding yet another program.

Later school start times have consistent positive impacts on an impressively broad range of adolescent outcomes, not just mental health but physical health and academic success. As an expert in school-based interventions, I can say that is not true of any other school-based intervention. Later school times are the best investment we can make in adolescent mental health.

I have three questions that are often asked that I wrote answers to.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): I would like for you to summarize please.

MARIA LARUSSO: Okay. So, I guess in sum, I would say the reason that we need to do this now, even though we've had these school start times for decades is that our students are not doing well right now, and we need to do something. School start times didn't cause the increase in mental

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problems, but it's the one thing that we know works and that we can do now, and it also is something that, unlike most programs, would be implemented equitably across districts because there is no variation in how it works. It works the same everywhere. So, given the growing mental health crisis of our youth today and knowing that we have something that works consistently to improve adolescent well-being and could have equitable effects across districts. The question shouldn't be, "Should we do this?" The question should be, "How fast can we get started?"

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony. Kelly followed by Wheatley Dunham.

KELLY WEBER: Hi, good evening. I'm also here related to House Bill 5217 in support of that bill. My name is Dr. Kelly Weber. I'm a parent of a West Hartford High School Junior. I'm a licensed clinical psychologist. I'm also the Associate Director of the Graduate Institute of Professional Psychology that trains future psychologists at the University of Hartford. I'm also a private practitioner with more than 25 years of clinical experience providing mental health services to children, adolescents, and families.

I express my views today as a concerned parent but also as a practitioner who sees the clinical effects of sleep deprivation and as a professor who fully appreciates the science that supports the rationale for making this critical change for teenagers throughout the State of Connecticut. I won't go over the science; it's been fully discussed today, and a seventh-grader did a great job summarizing it

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today, as well. It does see that later school start times appear to be a strong protective factor for teens, and improved sleep hygiene combined with later school start times yields the best outcomes for mental health and wellness. I am concerned that those who are speaking in opposition to later school start times at the town level are choosing to ignore the science while working against the best interests of our teens.

It is my hope that the establishment of the working group to study this issue and its potential benefits will not only provide opportunities to review the scientific evidence but also its financial benefits and challenges, potentially generating creative solutions for implementation statewide. Connecticut also has some of the earliest start times, as was mentioned before, and, so, its impact would be greater. And Dr. Cardona mentioned before this dilemma about he appreciates the science and the challenges of dragging his own 15-year-old out of bed in the morning, but he made this statement that stuck with me today, and he said, "Do I hire more school social workers or more school buses?" The science suggests perhaps that investing in later school start times and the added school buses that it might take would reduce the need for more social workers potentially.

Our society rarely holds a prevention mindset. We wait until we reach a breaking point to respond, usually paying more to address critical societal problems rather than investing in solutions that can prevent problems down the line. On this issue, I would argue that we are already at the point of crisis as we've heard from multiple folks testifying today, with several public health emergencies that

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need to be addressed including sleep deprivation, academic rates of anxiety and depression for adolescents and young adults and teens. And we need every tool in our toolbox to address these concerns, and later school start times is definitely one of these tools. Thank you so much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Hey, come back, come back, come back.

KELLY WEBER: I'm trying to get you home.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): We don't want to go home. Clearly we don't want to go home.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): I just felt compelled, and I had to say. I wanted to, even though they're not here currently, but to thank your profession, all the professors and the psychologists, everyone that came out to make the recommendations I think we heard this morning, to add to this group some of the experts that are looking at mental health issues and depression and all of that. So, I just really wanted to thank you for staying this late. We were just saying to ourselves that it's amazing at how many of the experts came out today; so, this proves that it's an important issue to look at.

KELLY WEBER: It certainly is. Thank you, Representative. I appreciate it.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): I thank you very much.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Where is she? Ms. Dunham. Okay, so Edward Cassidy. Okay, that's cool. Collin Bronick, Collin Bronick, no? Claire Matthews; is Claire here? Okay. Rachel Brown and Ms. Robinson. I'll give both of you get two minutes

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apiece, all right? Because clearly we don't want to go home. Elizabeth? Is Elizabeth Fraser here? So, this is our last group. All right. Knock it out!

YAKEITA ROBINSON: Good evening, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Yakeita Robinson, and I'm the Chief of Staff at Leadership, Education, and Athletics in Partnership, and my colleague joining me today is Rachel Kline Brown who is our Development Director. At LEAP we provide educational and social development programs for over 1200 children and teenagers ages seven through ten. Eighty-five percent of our children qualify for free lunch and live near or in poverty. Our services are free. We also hire 180 local high school and college students as counselors, instructors, and life guards.

We are here to oppose House Bill 5216. The bill would force youth agencies and community centers to adopt regulations designed for daycares even though they are very different entities. We strongly oppose the bill for six reasons, and they are as follows. It will cost LEAP somewhere between \$100,000 to \$200,000 dollars. This additional cost would end after-school and summer camp for 200 low-income children a year. The daycare regulation, which is 40 pages long and unrelated to community centers and after-school programs for school-age children. Since they were designed for actual daycares with pre-school-age children, they will require us to follow rules like detailing our naptime policy for 13 year olds.

And three, House Bill 5216 also is discriminatory. While it removes exemptions for organizations that

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serve low-income children of color, it retains exemptions for programs used by better-off families. While paying single-sport or tutoring-only programs for the duration of two hours will remain unregulated, LEAP after-school programs would be impacted since we provide multiple services and end at 6 p.m. to allow low-income families to pick their children up after work. The Commissioner argues we need these laws because of sexual abuse cases by other organizations around the country. A good response to this would be to require background checks and mandated reporter training as opposed to forcing onerous and irrelevant rules to organizations that are not daycares.

House Bill 5216 would require that high school and college-age counselors have 540 hours of service in similar programs. For a daycare running ten hours a day, this would be achieved in three months, but for after-school programs running a few hours a day, it would take over a year. Other rules require that we hire multiple consultants, a dentist and a registered dietician even though the New Haven Board of Education provides all of our meals.

To be clear, we don't oppose regulation. We are regulated by the state for our summer camp, and we are fine with that. But we do not run a daycare. Using daycare statutes and regulations for community centers and after-school programs is trying to fit a square peg through a round hole. We talked to Commissioner Bye, and we are happy to help support her and other organizations like LEAP to create new laws that regulate what we actually do to keep children safe. What is before you is a law that had no input from community agencies like ours and will create a huge, new cost and will prevent kids with

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the highest need for access to high-quality programs. Please vote No on House Bill 5216. Thank you. Any questions?

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): You want to ask something? Because you're the last word. You good?

RACHEL KLINE BROWN: We're good as long as you heard everything that Yakeita said, I think that we're good. We're happy to be regulated; we just want to be regulated in a way that makes sense and doesn't keep kids from actually getting the services that we provide and we feel like they really benefit from.

SENATOR MCCRORY (2ND): Thank you. Kids, we can go home now. Thank you guys. See you Monday. We'll reconvene.