



**TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY:**  
**In opposition to**  
**SB 851: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DISAGGREGATION OF STUDENT DATA BY ETHNIC**  
**SUBGROUPS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION SYSTEM.**

**February 22, 2019**  
**Education Committee**

Good morning Chairman McCrory and Chairman Sanchez, Vice Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Barry and members of the Education Committee. This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA), a non-profit organization affiliated with University of Connecticut School of Law concerning **SB 851: An Act Prohibiting The Disaggregation Of Student Data By Ethnic Subgroups In The Public School Information System** which we **strongly oppose**.

CCA provides holistic legal services to Connecticut's poorest and most vulnerable children through both individual representation and systemic advocacy. Through our Juvenile Justice, Educational Success, and Racial Justice Projects, CCA provides individual representation to youth at risk of or already in the juvenile justice system and collaborates with public defenders, probation officers, and other service providers to improve overall outcomes by protecting children's educational legal rights. Through our Racial Justice Project, we run Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) Reduction Projects in Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury, where we work with local stakeholders to develop strategies to reduce the disproportionate representation of youth of color in our juvenile justice system. CCA also plays a role in shaping juvenile justice policy through our membership on the Juvenile Justice Policy & Oversight Committee (JJPOC). Finally, CCA co-chairs a policy advocacy committee focused on the social-emotional health of our youngest learners, along with the Office of the Child Advocate, called "Setting Young Children Up for Success."<sup>1</sup>

CCA **strongly opposes SB 851**. The collection of data on racial and ethnic disparities in our public school system is absolutely crucial as it allows us to improve our equitable treatment of all Connecticut children. Such data enables us to **shine a light on problematic and unfair discipline practices** that feed and perpetuate the school to prison pipeline for Connecticut's most vulnerable children and youth. This **data is used to effectuate progressive change** at the individual school level, a district wide level and also at the state level.

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<sup>1</sup> We held a legislative forum on this topic and wrote a policy brief with suggestions for supporting this population which can be found at: <https://cca-ct.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Setting-Young-Children-Up-for-Success-Policy-Brief-Feb-2018.pdf>

For example, disaggregated data has been used to make substantial progress reducing student arrests and school discipline of students of color through the Racial and Ethnic Disparity (RED) Committees we chair across the state. In our Hartford Committee, in 2018, we have been able to pinpoint specific schools (e.g. High School, Inc.) responsible for suspending disproportionate numbers of students of color to ensure appropriate training and oversight is directed at those individual schools to reduce discipline and improve culture. Similarly in Bridgeport, we reduced school based arrests of students of color from 63 to 42 by nearly 33% from 2017 to 2018.<sup>2</sup> District-wide data showing extensive disproportionality in student discipline and arrest has enabled us to identify municipalities in need of RED work most recently including the City of Hamden, where such work is just commencing on the ground.

On a statewide level, disaggregated data provided the foundation to pursue and file litigation against the state on behalf of Black expelled students. Disaggregated data showed that while Black students made up roughly 13 percent of statewide school enrollment, they account for 33 percent of all expulsions in the state.<sup>3</sup> This litigation, *Alicia B. v. Malloy, et. al.* filed in 2015, resulted a number of progressive policy changes benefitting all expelled students, including a State Board of Education Policy statement regarding the importance of reducing disproportionate discipline just recently passed and a commitment by the state to monitor disaggregated data to flag cities and towns disproportionately disciplining children of color.<sup>4</sup>

Simply put, we cannot afford for this data to be inaccessible to us; it is essential to defend the rights of our most vulnerable students, students of color. We have been building positive momentum in our state through our RED work and systemic litigation and advocacy so that schools can be more just for *all* of our children; SB 851 would only set us back decades in our quest to study the problem and find effective solutions. For these reasons, we urge the Committee **not** to endorse bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact our office with questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

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<sup>2</sup> Although these arrests have been reduced, Black and Hispanic students continue to be arrested at higher rates. This underscores the continued work that needs to be done, and for the importance of having this data disaggregated.

<sup>3</sup> See *Alicia B.* complaint pages 30-32 for these data figures based on disaggregated data provided by the CT State Department of Education: <http://cca-ct.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Exp-Complaint-12-2015.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>See Center for Children's Advocacy website for a review of and links to these measures: <https://cca-ct.org/our-work/systemic-advocacy/>