



**Testimony concerning  
SB 948: AN ACT ADDRESSING EDUCATION FUNDING AND RACIAL EQUITY IN  
CONNECTICUT  
and  
HB 6535, AN ACT CONCERNING ISSUES RELATED TO SCHOOL SECURITY**

**March 3, 2021  
Education Committee**

Chairman McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel and other members of the 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 and the largest children's legal rights organization in New England. CCA's mission is to promote and protect the legal rights and interests of our state's most vulnerable children and young adults who are dependent upon the judicial, child welfare, health and mental health, education, and juvenile justice systems for their care.

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CCA supports **S.B. 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding And Racial Equity In Connecticut** which provides specific and targeted recommendations to improve Connecticut's current education funding system, which exacerbates and perpetuates systemic racial disparities. Instead of basing educational funding on local property tax, the bill proposes a student-centered funding approach. S.B. 948 provides a formula to level the inequities in Connecticut's education system that have been intensified during the ongoing pandemic at the expense of our students of color.

**S.B. 948 increases the funding formula weight given to English Learner (EL) students as well as the weight given to districts with high poverty concentrations.**

As a result of these two measures, more money will be allocated to students with greater needs and the districts they live in. For example, these changes will result in 2,300 more annual dollars directed to a single English Learner in a high poverty district.

**S.B. 948 will ensure that districts receive the proper funding to begin to close the opportunity gaps experienced by their students.**

Within the course of two years, SB 948 will ensure that our most needy districts, such as Bridgeport, New Haven, and New Britain, will receive a substantial increase in funding to help close the gap between districts that contain primarily students of color and districts with primarily white students. Moreover, S.B. 948 will provide for a more immediate influx of funds right now by securing state funding up front which can be directed to our most needy and vulnerable students.

The time is now to begin to implement these changes in funding. In the work we do at CCA, we see the systemic failures of Connecticut's high poverty districts through our clients on a daily basis - classes of children without enough quality special education teachers, English Learners who are being denied EL services during COVID and countless children without the benefit of tiered interventions. S.B. 948 is a start in the right direction to level the playing field for these children and assist in overcoming these failures by increasing funding based on a student-centered approach.

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**CCA cautions the Committee against passing HB 6535, An Act Concerning Issues Related to School Security, inclusive of Section 1 of this bill as written.** Section (1), which proposes a work group to study the role and value of School Resource Officers (SROs) in our public schools, is notably devoid of student, parent or advocate participation. Any discussion of the value of police in our schools should not and cannot occur without the input of those the police presence impacts the most – our students, and their families, as well as the advocacy organizations like ours that represent them.

While the role of police in our schools may be an issue that continues to be debated at policy tables, the data and research collected by our colleagues at Connecticut Voices for Children, highlighted by partners at UCONN's Gun Violence Prevent Research Interest Project, and reinforced nationally, strongly suggests that **the negative impacts of such police presence in schools– the disproportionate increase in arrests and discipline of children of color – outweigh any potential benefit.** What is more, there is a dearth of research to establishing that SROs actually make our schools safer. Studies completed on this issue have not resulted in conclusive evidence which correlates police presence in schools to a safer school environment. In fact, what we know from the students of color we serve is that having armed police officers within their schools walls actually makes them feel *less* safe about being in school.

CCA believes that for the above stated reasons, a **work group to study the role of SROs in schools is in fact unnecessary.** We believe existing data and research sufficiently establishes students are better served when police remain in the community. However, if this bill must move forward with Section (1) intact, it is essential that this section be amended to ensure that the voices of students, their families and the advocacy groups that represent them are centered at the policy-making table.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the Center for Children’s Advocacy **urges the Committee to pass SB 948**. Should the Committee choose **to pass H.B. 6535**, CCA **urges its members to either remove Section (1) or, if not, ensure language is added to it to include students, parents and advocacy groups as a part of any work group convened** to examine the role of SROs.

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

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

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