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THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

March 11, 2015

Raised Bill No. 1059 – AN ACT CONCERNING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Good Afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and Members of the Education Committee,

I am Dr. Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) and the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC). Our association provides extensive professional development for school leaders in nearly 1000 public, parochial, charter and magnet schools in the state. We are also the regulating body for interscholastic athletics and student activities at the elementary, middle and high school levels. I was a member of the Legislature's High School Graduation Issues Task Force which submitted a report to the Legislature in January of 2012 regarding the current high school graduation requirements. I offer testimony today regarding Raised Bill 1059, AN ACT CONCERNING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS.

The bill proposes a one-year delay in the implementation of graduation requirements for the current class of 2020. I believe the delay is necessary, but it needs to be defined as a delay in order to closely study the Task Force report, revisit the current requirements, and commit to the processes necessary to modify those requirements.

The 2020 graduation requirements have long been a concern for principals. They include an overly prescriptive curriculum which may provide barriers to mastery-based assessment systems and personalized learning approaches which can be more meaningful for students than traditional seat time coursework for credits. The requirements also present huge implementation challenges. The facility, staffing, and other resources required to establish programs to meet these requirements are next to impossible in many districts and may result in compromising existing programs. For example, implementing the two-credit world language requirement in the CT Technical High School System may require the reduction of two credits of vocational training, thus compromising the unique learning experience best matched for those students.

In conclusion, CAS supports of the concept of delaying implementation, but we emphasize that the delay must be for the purpose of revisiting the current requirements and modifying them as necessary to better meet the learning needs of all children. Our association stands ready to assist your committee in this important work. I have attached a copy of the High School Graduation Issues Task Force Report for your consideration. Thank-you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully,

Karissa L. Niehoff
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