

Written Testimony of

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Before the Education Committee

**HB 5378 AAC THE INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN PROGRAMS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS IN CONNECTICUT.**

March 9, 2020

I have been an elementary school educator for over 34 years. I have taught pre-K all the way up to second grade. Currently, I teach in a school of over 500 students which in our district is second largest to the high school. Yet, we have the same amount of support staff as schools with students as few as 200. We do not have an assistant principal, we share a social worker with the whole region, have 1.2 school psychologists, 1 school counselor... you get the idea. I used to believe that schools would be ready for students no matter what the age and sent my youngest daughter to school at 4.8 years of age as our cut-off date for entering Kindergarten was 12/31. At the time, our region's kindergarten classrooms were primarily play based learning with a heavy emphasis on social emotional learning. My daughter thrived and is now a senior at Rochester Institute of Technology. If I had to make that decision now, given the higher expectations, scope and sequence of the curricula and the pacing, I would definitely hold my child out. I strongly believe that students should be 5 when they begin Kindergarten in the fall. Additionally, with each passing year since the Common Core State Standards were adopted, I have seen an huge increase in attention and behavioral issues with the students in my class. I have had students in my first grade class who would throw chairs, shout and run around the classroom, crawl under desks while students were working, jump from table to table, hit teachers, and intentionally physically and emotionally harm classmates and peers. In spite of my best efforts these students are only removed from the classroom when they are a physical danger to others. The only disciplinary measure taken is restorative and/or to call the parents to report incidents. The emotional trauma that the other 19 students in my class endured was beyond measure. Aside from the fact that the student inflicting the harm was not handled in a way that would help him grow academically and emotionally, it was nearly impossible for me to teach and for the other students to learn when there was continual disruptions made by this student. My primary goal had to be to keep everyone safe. It was only after several parents filed bullying complaints and a family requested their son be transferred to another classroom, did the administration take action to provide a different placement for the student. I strongly believe that a more comprehensive approach to address the following issues is needed: Kindergarten Start Age, Acceptable Counselor Social Worker and School Psychologist Staff Ratios, Social Emotional Learning, and Revision of the Common Core for grades K-2 in and incorporate strategies to promote social-emotional learning.

Thank you for your consideration.

