



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Amy Dowell, Connecticut State Director
Education Reform Now Connecticut
February 22, 2019

Re: S.B. 813, An Act Concerning A Study of Issues Relating to Early College and Dual Enrollment Programs

S.B. 851, An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel, and Members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding Senate Bills 813 and 851.

S.B. 813, An Act Concerning A Study of Issues Relating to Early College and Dual Enrollment Programs

This bill would require the Department of Education to study issues relating to middle college, early college, and Connecticut Early College Opportunity programs, including a review of how enrollment and graduation data are reported and collected in the public school information system. I encourage the Education Committee to go even further by including career pathway programs in this discussion. When we talk about the success of our students, we describe it in terms of “college and career readiness,” because our aim is to build an education system that sets students up for success in the next phase of life—be that higher education or a career. For that reason, career pathways need to be included as another option in the same discussion with early college programs.

Furthermore, we need to establish a common understanding about the programs that exist and facilitate direct comparisons of the data so that we can determine and scale the programs that work best. In my capacity as State Director of Education Reform Now, I hear regularly about the growing importance of college and career pathways from both my national peers and your fellow legislators. But we’re up against an utter lack of clarity about which of these programs already exist and the extent to which they’re successful. There’s the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, the Agricultural Science schools, and community colleges providing workforce development and certification. There are workforce trainings through the CT Departments of Labor, and of Economic and Community Development. There are private industry partners building training programs to create their own pipeline of skilled workers. But we can’t advocate for what’s best for students in this state without a thorough review of what’s out there and what’s working.

For the sake of our students, our businesses, and our state’s economy, I urge this body to call for an informational hearing to cover these issues. And once we’ve had that hearing and compiled that data, let’s commit to investing this session in the early college programs and career pathways that the data shows are working.

S.B. 851, An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System

I am also writing to voice our strong opposition to S.B. 851, which appears to have been designed to hide disparities in how our education system meets the needs of vulnerable student populations.

If we didn't disaggregate data in this state, we would never know about the wide and persistent achievement gaps and opportunity gaps that prevent students of color and students from low-income families from being successful and achieving their dreams.

Averages are good at hiding ugly truths. But this Committee's entire purpose is to help Connecticut students lead successful lives, and we can accomplish this by taking action in response to the facts.

