

Testimony of

Carrie Cassady
Stonington Teacher

Before the
Education Committee

Re: HB 5213 – An Act Concerning Disconnected Youth

February 28, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Carrie Cassady, and I teach 6th grade science in Stonington. I am speaking today about HB 5213 - An Act Concerning Disconnected Youth.

While this bill takes important steps toward addressing this vital issue, there is more that must be considered. My students are not yet 14 but I work with students who are disconnected and not engaged with school. This is not only a high school issue, it impacts classrooms at every level. I've had a handful of disconnected students in any given year, but that number has grown since the pandemic. During the pandemic, I became familiar with many ceilings and the occasional forehead. During this time, school was not relevant to the lives of my students. They were preoccupied with things that were happening at home and the reasons they were not in our schools and classrooms.

We need to find new ways to engage all students, at every level, and to give them a variety of ways to participate in our communities. We need to find ways to break through the barriers that keep students from being successful in school and life. We also need to remember that not every student wants, or needs, to go to college. Students who choose a path other than college should feel that their skills and interests are valued.

By letting our students know that we value their interests and skills will help foster stronger relationships between educators and their students. This, in turn, will increase student engagement. If students are engaged, they will have the opportunity to learn the skills needed to be successful.

Of course, this work needs funding so that all barriers to success can be removed.

Thank you for your time,

Carrie Cassady