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TESTIMONY AGAINST S.B. No.175, **An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Department of Education**

Good morning Chairmen and members of the Committee. I am Attorney Deborah G. Stevenson, and I am here today speaking **AGAINST S.B. No. 175**, both in my personal and professional capacity.

The Connecticut Parents' Rights Coalition stands steadfastly **against** adoption of this bill for a variety of reasons, and our members have submitted separate testimony concerning those reasons, which I urge the Committee to review. Chief among the concerns are that this bill strips parents of their fundamental Constitutionally protected right to the upbringing and education of their children, and improperly and wholly unfairly punishes them, their schools, and their school districts, for exercising their unalienable right to protect their children from harm.

The bill does so by imposing a system of so-called "accountability" whereby schools and districts are placed in lowered categories that threaten both funding for, and the authority of, local school districts to determine what is best for the education of the children in the community, simply because more than five percent of the parents in the community refuse to allow their children to participate in the SBAC test, or other measures, that the parents deem harmful to their children.

In essence, the bill codifies a system of coercion by the state government compelling parents to engage in the conduct, which they have a legal right not to do, by instilling in them a fear that if the parents do not submit to the coercion, the state will take official action against them, their school, and their district. This, quite simply, is a codification of the statutory crime of coercion, which can be found at Conn. General Statute Section 53a-192.

This is simply reprehensible and cannot be allowed.

In fact, the legislature has no authority to adopt a law that is unconstitutional, or to direct school administration to act coercively. To adopt this law, codifying the tactic of punishing schools and school districts when parents exercise their Constitutional right and statutory duty to protect their child from harm, violates the Constitutional right of parents. In essence, you would be adopting an unconstitutional law and sanctioning actions that already are deemed illegal.

In addition, we urge **rejection** of this bill also because of the provision included in it to establish "**parent universities**". First, the bill contains no definition for what is a "parent university", how the state or local government may require parents to attend such a "university", whether similar coercive tactics will be utilized in compelling parents to attend, what will be taught, or whom will conduct the teaching at the "university". More importantly, however, the provision improperly assumes that the government has the authority to instruct parents in the upbringing and education of their children, or, at the very least, that the government somehow is an equal partner in this fundamental individual right of parents to the upbringing and education of their children. The government simply has no such authority, is not authorized to provide such instruction, or to coerce parents into receiving such instruction. To adopt such a measure, especially when there are no definitions or limitations provided, is wholly improper and unwise.

For all of the above reasons, and many more, we urge you to **VOTE NO on SB 175**.