



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
February 28, 2006

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Testimony on Various Bills

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and distinguished members of the Education Committee thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill No. 1114, *An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding Education* as well as other bills being heard today.

S.B. No. 1114 - An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding Education

See PowerPoint.

S.B. No. 1113 - An Act Concerning Unified School District #1 Education Credit

I am here before you to request favorable consideration of S.B. No. 1113, *An Act Concerning Unified School Districts #1 Education Credit*. This bill puts the requirement of notifying the Department of Correction when an ex-offender enrolls in a school on the school district where the ex-offender enrolls. As it is now, the individual school would need to notify DOC if and when an ex-offender enrolls in their school in order for DOC to forward any pertinent records, but such schools are not required at this time.

H.B. No. 7241 - An Act Concerning After School Program Grants and Parent Involvement

This proposal would specify that after-school programs funded by the Department of Education grants under CGS 10-16x have a parent involvement component. Examples of activities that could be undertaken are: providing materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve academic achievement and holding regular meetings with parents to help foster parental involvement and participation. Approval of this proposal is recommended as parental involvement is key to a child's academic achievement.

This added component would not increase the state's cost for the program as it would be done within the available appropriations.

S.B. No. 1281 – An Act Concerning Pension Portability for School Superintendents and Additional Retirement Credit for School Administrators

OPM is opposed to this bill because it will substantially increase the unfunded liability of the Teachers Retirement System. Under current mandates, ten months of credited service is equal to one year of credited service. By allowing additional credit beyond the ten months, there is the potential for administrators to earn 6 years of credited service every 5 years. The bill also includes a provision for superintendents to purchase additional credit for service as a superintendent in another state of the U.S., its territories or possessions. Both scenarios in this bill will increase the unfunded liability for teachers resulting in increased costs to the state and its citizens. As of June 30, 2006, the unfunded liability for the Teachers Retirement System was approximately \$6.9 billion.

S.B. No. 1282 – An Act Concerning Model Early Childhood Learning Programs

OPM is opposed to this bill. This proposal would amend the pilot early childhood learning grant program established under CGS 10-265j to expand eligibility for the grant. It also adds that the programs be limited to five years of eligibility and that they be associated with institutions of higher education. While this is a commendable program, the Governor is recommending significant additional funding through the ECS grant, which towns may use to do similar programs if they wish. Since the Governor is recommending a significant increase in educational aid through the ECS grant, which will be more equitably distributed to towns, she is recommending that all but the School Readiness component of the Priority School District grant be phased out by FY2012. This program is funded through the Priority School District grant so there would be no funds available for this program after FY2012.

S.B. 1283 – An Act Concerning the Advisory Committee on Connecticut's Technical High Schools

OPM is in favor of this bill. This proposal would reconstitute the statewide technical high school advisory committee. The State Board of Education would appoint the committee's members and will include parental involvement. SDE is proposing that the committee that was established in 1988 be reconstituted in order to make recommendations to the State Board of Education concerning various issues including how the technical high schools may best meeting the skill needs of employers and new trade programs as well as the consolidation of reporting to the General Assembly about the technical high school system. Approval of this bill is recommended as it would streamline the reporting process and may lead to savings if the reporting requirements are consolidated.

S.B. No. 1284 – An Act Concerning Charter School Health Services

OPM is in favor of this bill. This proposal would require towns to provide to charter schools the same health services that they are required to provide to nonpublic schools and make the towns eligible for a portion of the costs to provide these services. By law, children in nonpublic schools are entitled to the same health services as public school children if the majority of children in the school are residents of Connecticut. Towns are reimbursed on a sliding scale of 10-90%. Currently, towns are not required to provide these services to students in charter schools in their town and there is no provision for reimbursing towns for providing health services to charter school students. Approval is recommended as this proposal would require that the same health services that public and nonpublic schools currently have are also provided in charter schools and are reimbursed according to CGS 10-217a. Currently, reimbursements are made within available appropriations.

S.B. No. 1285 – An Act Concerning the Connecticut Career Certificate Program

OPM is in favor of this bill. This proposal would amend the Connecticut career certificate program statutes to make them consistent with federal statutes. This proposal would:

- (1) Specifies that the programs leading to a Connecticut Career Certificate are career pathway programs.
- (2) Deletes the provisions related to regional school-to-work partnerships (these were required under the expired federal law).
- (3) Includes workplace safety awareness in the list of programs that must be offered.
- (4) Specifies that the career clusters be organized under the 16 federal career clusters and that the Commissioner of Education maintain a list of projected occupation growth area clusters within the state.
- (5) Clarifies that the employment of students in career pathway programs must be in compliance with state labor laws.
- (6) Amends the statutes to support only the development of educators administering the programs.

Approval of this proposal is recommended. There is no cost associated with this proposal.

S.B. No. 1286 – An Act Concerning the Filling of Interdistrict Magnet School Vacancies

This proposal would allow vacancies in an interdistrict magnet school to be filled with students from towns that have not agreed to participate in the magnet school. Under this proposal (1) a magnet school may enroll, by lottery, students from towns that do not participate in the school and (2) the town in which any such student resides must pay the same magnet school tuition, if any, as the participating towns pay. If the tuition is not paid, the tuition may be withheld from the town's ECS grant and provided to the magnet school. There is strong parental and student interest in filling empty seats at magnet schools with students from non-participating districts. The Department and OPM agree that this is an important option to give to students; however OPM would recommend

that her proposal regarding filling magnet school vacancies (S.B. No. 1114 section 11) be approved with modification to include non-participating districts.

S.B. No. 1287 – An Act Concerning Visiting International Teacher Permits

This proposal would establish a durational permit for visiting international teachers to teach in subject shortage areas in Connecticut. Permits would be issued for visiting international teachers who have J visas and would teach for a maximum of three years. The teacher would have to successfully complete an oral proficiency in English examinations approved by the Commissioner of Education. Approval of this proposal is recommended. Connecticut continues to have difficulty in filling teacher positions in subject shortage areas. Allowing visiting international teachers to fill these positions would help with this shortage problem and would provide students with a multicultural experience that is beneficial in this global economy. There is no cost associated with this proposal.

Proposed S.B. No. 913 – An Act Concerning a Connecticut Youth Corps

OPM would like to reserve its recommendation until this bill is drafted and we have more information. This proposal does sound like a very worthwhile program; however more information is needed on how it would impact the State Department of Education and the budget.

I would like to again thank the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.