



Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium
Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:
Board for State Education Ed Klonoski

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Virtual Instruction for CT Public Schools

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Testimony

by

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Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee. My name is Ed Klonoski, President of the CTDLC, and I am here today to support **Raised Bill 7354, An Act Concerning The Commission On Educational Technology (CET) And Virtual Instruction For Connecticut Public Schools And Internet Safety.**

The CTDLC is seeking to coordinate a program for Virtual Instruction for CT Public Schools that we call the Connecticut Virtual Learning Center (VLC). The goal of the program is to centrally coordinate online learning options for Connecticut middle and high school students and teachers. To quote the language of the bill, the outcomes of Virtual Instruction for CT Public Schools would include:

Ensuring that teachers in public schools have access to professional development in on-line instruction and that students attending public schools have equitable on-line access to courses, including, but not limited to, the following: (i) Dual credit and advanced placement courses, (ii) courses in low enrollment areas, (iii) courses for credit recovery, and (iv) workforce training courses.

There are already efforts underway to develop online programs in K-12 space—notably the effort by the Regional Education Service Center (RESC) Alliance to offer courses and training from the Concord Virtual High School (VHS); Connecticut Career Choices, a four-year-old program funded by the Office for Workforce Competitiveness that has developed science and technology-related curriculum delivered online over the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), and the CTDLC Adult Virtual High School (AVHS) program that serves the Adult Diploma students. These and other efforts, including the programs in 23 other states, have proven that students successfully earn credit and achieve high test results from online coursework, and that these online options can supplement the offerings available in school districts in such critical areas as Advanced Placement, credit recovery, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics courses (STEM)—all while providing cost savings.

We have included with our testimony a separate document that details the efficacy of online learning for middle and high school students.

This bill requests funding for a two-year pilot program that would support 1,000 enrollments in year one and 1500 enrollments in year two. These enrollments would include a variety of online coursework that would:

- Grow the online efforts that already exist;
- Test the efficacy of several online/hybrid courseware providers (including CT created content);
- Provide coursework in Advanced Placement (AP), credit recovery, and STEM; and
- Distribute the enrollments through a representative sample of Connecticut's districts—rural, urban, suburban; wealthy and poor; large and small.

In other words, this two-year pilot would take Connecticut's current efforts to scale.

Nine years ago, the CT General Assembly supported a similar collaborative approach to growing distance learning in higher education, and assigned the CTDLC a coordinating role. That approach has resulted in over 33,000 enrollments in Connecticut's higher education offerings in Academic Year 2006. Building on that experience, and leveraging existing state investments in the CTDLC and the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), this program would:

- Create a single point of presence for all the Connecticut online offerings (portal);
- Train Connecticut teachers to enlarge the number of Connecticut certified teachers prepared to offer online courses;
- Collect data on enrollment, outcomes, accountability, and support services;
- Introduce online student services including eTutoring;
- Offer training in mentoring to districts with participating students;
- Create an Executive Council of interested parties including: CT State Dept. of Education (SDE), CET, RESCs, Department of Higher Education (DHE), CT Association of Principals and Superintendents (CAPS), and Teachers.

The advantages of acting on this proposal now include:

- Centralized infrastructure (cost saving & non-redundant);
- Statewide contracts;
- Single place for service access;
- Collaborative student services (eTutoring, etc.);
- Reporting and data collected for quality improvement and accountability;
- Leveraging existing expertise, technology, mission, personnel (CTDLC, CEN, RESC).

In preparing for this proposal, we have consulted with the CT SDE, the RESC Alliance, the Office for Workforce Competitiveness, the CT Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers. If you choose to fund this initiative, the CTDLC will bring all of these partners into the project to be sure that the effort builds on the good work that is already underway, and meets the quality, access, and financial goals of all the invested organizations.

Thank you for your consideration. I can answer any questions that you might have.