



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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Date: *3/12/07* Bill Number: *7273, 7292*  
*7344, 7345, 7346 etc...* **Testimony  
Submitted to the  
Education Committee**

**March 12, 2007**

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on the numerous bills before you today. Several of the issues before you today, while well intentioned, create unreasonable burdens on the State Department of Education and local and regional school districts, diverting attention away from school improvement efforts.

CABE opposes HB 7273, An Act Concerning Suspensions and Expulsions by Local and Regional Boards of Education. Among other provisions, this bill would involve boards of education in the suspension process, a matter most appropriately handled by the administration. Boards of education have policies and procedures in place to provide guidance to their administration in handling student disciplinary issues. It is particularly important that discipline be administered as soon after the misconduct as possible. Involving boards of education in the implementation of suspensions is not productive. In addition, existing legislation already provides for expelled students to apply for early readmission to school, and allows a board of education to delegate the authority for readmission decisions to the superintendent.

CABE opposes HB 7292, An Act Concerning CPR Training and Automatic External Defibrillators. It is unwise to continue to add specific subject matter to the program of instruction required in public schools. With respect to the provision requiring the board of education to insure that a person trained to use an automatic external defibrillator is available at each high school "for all athletic activities", we question whether this applies to school sponsored activities, or would extend to the community use of the school facility. It would be unreasonable to impose upon the board of education the responsibility for providing the trained staff at all such events.

CABE supports HB 7344, An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention of Teachers. The creation of a program to encourage paraprofessionals to become certified teachers is an excellent mechanism to expand the teaching pool. Efforts to encourage the recruitment and retention of minority teachers are critical.

CABE supports the provision of HB 7345, An Act Concerning Great Schools for All, which would expand the availability of preschool programs. CABE opposes the provisions of this bill which would establish a letter grade rating system for public schools. The time and resources of State Department of Education staff would be better spent providing assistance to districts in developing and implementing school improvement. The proposed requirement for an annual review by the department of elements such as educational practices, teacher and staff morale, parent participation and student motivation is an overwhelming task and contains numerous of subjective elements.

CABE supports HB 7346, An Act Concerning Green School Buildings and the Gross Earnings Tax on Diesel Fuel for School Buses. This bill would provide an increase in the school construction grant reimbursement of

five percentage points for school building projects that meet or exceed the green building standard, and would exempt school bus diesel fuel from the gross earnings tax.

CABE opposes the provision of HB 7350, An Act Concerning the Prevention of Childhood Obesity, which creates a responsibility for boards of education to provide an assessment of the body mass index of each sixth grader. This is an issue most appropriately handled between parents and a child's primary care provider.

CABE opposes SB 1354, An Act Concerning the Chairperson of the State Board of Education and the Appointment of the Commissioner of Education. The proposal to require that the chairperson of the State Board of Education hold a degree in education is unnecessary, given the policymaking nature of the State Board of Education. Such a requirement would eliminate from consideration highly talented leaders, and create the implication that the State Board of Education serves as an administrative rather than a policymaking body. CABE also opposes the provision that would make the appointment of the Commissioner of Education based on the governor's recommendation, subject to the approval of the General Assembly. This proposal would make the process for selection of Commissioner much more difficult, would narrow the field of qualified candidates, and delay the appointment process.

CABE opposes the provision of SB 1408, An Act Concerning Charter Schools, which would require boards of education to provide transportation services to students attending a charter school outside the district in which the student resides. This new mandate could significantly increase the transportation costs for school districts.

CABE opposes SB 1409, An Act Concerning Regionalization of Education. This bill proposes to consolidate the 166 districts in Connecticut into 6 regional school districts beginning with the 2012 - 2013 school year. CABE is gravely concerned that the time, effort and resources devoted to such a monumental change in the governance structure in Connecticut public education will divert the focus from badly needed efforts to affect school improvements.

CABE has several concerns with respect to the implementation of SB 1410, An Act Concerning High School Curriculum and Graduation Requirements Reform. Rather than focusing exclusively on changing the high school graduation requirements, we urge the Legislature to review the work of the State Department of Education's High School Reform Task Force, which recommends comprehensive changes in the high school experience. In addition, while the increase in graduation requirements for math, science, and foreign language are laudable, these are also areas of identified teacher shortages. We are deeply concerned about the ability of boards of education to hire the certified staff necessary to provide the instruction to fulfill these new requirements. The proposal to require achievement of proficiency or higher on the CAPT test as a graduation requirement must be implemented with a clear understanding that students have the option of demonstrating their proficiency in an alternative means selected by their local or regional board of education. Without such an option, this proposal could have unintended consequence of increasing the high school dropout rate.

CABE opposes SB 1413, An Act Concerning In-School Suspensions, which would limit the authority for school administrators to discipline students by removing them from the school setting for a limited time except in exceptional circumstances. School administrators need the flexibility allowed under existing law to determine the appropriate type of suspension, whether in school or out of school, that would provide the most effective discipline.

CABE opposes HB 7351, An Act Concerning Textbook Loans. By expanding the voluntary textbook loan program to include all non public school students, regardless of where they reside, boards of education that have an existing policy of providing for textbook loans to resident students may be forced to eliminate those programs.