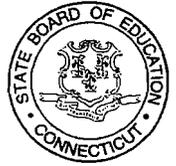




STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



EDUCATION COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 28, 2007

**TESTIMONY OF
GEORGE A. COLEMAN, INTERIM COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
ON**

BILL 1114

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
REGARDING EDUCATION**

The Governor has proposed a bold, ambitious plan to make significant changes to how the state provides financial support for education. As you know, part of this plan is to amend the education cost sharing (ECS) formula to substantially increase the state's share of education funding. However, coupled with that initiative are also (1) increased funding for the state's school readiness programs and public school choice programs, e.g., OPEN Choice, interdistrict magnet schools, charter schools and vocational agriculture centers; (2) new requirements and programs that will impact on school districts to enhance educational opportunities and expectations for all students, from early childhood through the high school grades; and (3) the establishment of an accountability system to hold school districts to high standards with clearly identified consequences if those standards are not met. The Department supports these proposals.

Of particular importance is Section 15 of Bill 1114 concerning school district accountability. With significant new funds to improve Connecticut's schools, raise achievement levels of Connecticut's students, and in time provide for the enhancement of Connecticut's workforce, it is necessary to ensure that these additional funds accomplish these purposes. At the same time, a component of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law is that there be consequences for school districts in which students fail to improve over time. However, while NCLB provides a framework for those consequences, it does not empower the State Board of Education to undertake specific actions and current state law does not provide the tools to do this effectively. Consequently, it is necessary to provide in statute for an accountability system so that the state is able to intervene in school district operations to ensure that Connecticut's students achieve to the best of their abilities, the state's money is well spent, and the federal requirements are met. Clearly, now is the time to set forth the powers needed by the State Board of Education to ensure the highest standards for Connecticut's students.

The Department of Education supports the initiatives set forth by the Governor in Bill 1114 and looks forward to working with the committee to address some drafting issues when this bill moves forward. Connecticut's students are one of the state's most important resources, and an educated workforce is essential to its future.