

Hearing Testimony Speaker:  
Phil Apruzzese

Date: 3/12/07 Bill Number: 1405

*Testimony of*  
Phil Apruzzese, President  
*Connecticut Education Association*  
*Before the Education Committee*

*Regarding*

***S.B. 1405 'AN ACT CONCERNING INTERVENTION MODEL FOR SCHOOLS IN  
NEED OF IMPROVEMENT AND CONCERNING URBAN EDUCATION'***

***March 12, 2007***

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischman, I am here before you to comment on Senate Bill 1405 "An Act Concerning Intervention Model for School In Need of Improvement and Concerning Urban Education".

What is before you is historic legislation being proposed in the arena of public education. This proposal is Connecticut's first comprehensive initiative, supported by a coalition called the Connecticut Alliance for Improving Teaching and Learning. The unusual nature of the coalition, involving unions and associations representing teachers, administrators, superintendents, school boards, and higher education, speaks to the complexity of the challenges faced by urban school districts. The proposal addresses these challenges by stimulating a process of systemic change in urban districts.

This legislation brings to life an *Urban Initiative* that would provide a new systemic approach to raising student achievement in urban schools. The central hub of the effort would be the establishment of a new Center for Urban Education at UConn's Neag School of Education. It, along with outreach centers proposed for UConn's branch campuses in Hartford, Waterbury, Groton, and Stamford would provide a range of "center services" enabling urban districts to integrate research-based, best practices into their classrooms.

One center would be a new school concept called *CommPACT* Schools. These schools would be modeled along the lines of Boston's Pilot Schools. Initial funding would support up to 12 schools. They would be formed through collaboration between the school administration and the teachers' union, and they would promote autonomy in governance, budgeting, and curriculum.

A second center would fill a large need that confronts urban school districts. That service concerns the attraction and retention of high-quality teachers. The center would provide both critical assistance to school districts in recruiting new teachers and an equally critical intense program of support for teachers after they are hired.

A third center service is considered a linchpin because it would promote “continuous improvement” as a fundamental practice. The center would work with member districts to develop and implement system-wide approaches to improve school climate and discipline using research-based and sustainable programs, recognizing that school climate and a culture of continuous improvement are inextricably linked with increased student achievement.

A fourth center service would promote new thinking on how to engage parents with their children’s school and education.

The center would begin its work in July 2007. After the formation and establishment of a governing body, it would conduct a needs assessment and develop a five-year plan with its member districts. The plan, along with a progress report, would be presented to the Joint Committee on Education in January of 2008. An annual report and any revisions to the plan would be submitted each year through January 2012.

The proposed legislation will be able to work within the new accountability proposal that the Governor’s ECS Commission has recommended and that we have endorsed to measure progress using a variety of academic and behavioral benchmarks.

In closing, let me say that teaching and being an educator in these times is not for the faint of heart. It is for people that are dedicated to going into the neediest cities and schools in our state and working with all children. That’s where this legislation rises above all others and should be accepted.