

Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee

March 10, 2008

Raised Bill #5825 An Act Concerning Regional Educational Service Centers

Good afternoon, Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischman and members of the Education Committee. My name is Bruce Douglas. I represent the Regional Education Service Center Alliance, an organization that represents all of the school districts in the State of Connecticut.

I am here to support the passage of Raised Bill 5825, An Act Concerning Regional Educational Service Centers which addresses the underfunding of RESCs and RESC lease reimbursement.

Regional Educational Service Centers, or RESCs, were created under an act of legislation in 1966. Since their inception, RESCs have played an important role in assisting school districts in meeting federal, state and local mandates, and in supporting local initiatives. Recent mandates and changing public school needs have further increased expectations and need for RESCs to have the capacity to assist districts.

Key Points:

1. RESCS work collaboratively with districts to provide programs and services that result in cost efficiencies and improved services. This has occurred in a time of reduced funding for RESCs.
2. The legislation under which RESCs were created provides for state funding to support their core work. In 2000, the funding formula was revised to ensure equity in funding among the 6 RESCs in CT. That adjustment recognized the importance of RESCs in public education. We were grateful that language was changed and appreciated the recognition of work RESCs do for their districts and communities.
3. However, although language was changed, there was no increase in appropriations to provide funding as called for in the revised statute. In fact, total money allocated for base RESC funding has been reduced from the 1998 level of approximately 2 million dollars to 1.7 million in today's dollars.

4. This creates a hardship and limits RESCs' ability to engage in the necessary development work that allows us to build capacity and to be responsive to districts' needs.
5. Reduced funding for lease reimbursement further limits the ability of RESCs to be responsive to our districts. In order to be able to meet the changing needs of districts, RESCs need to be flexible. To recognize and encourage flexibility in securing and leaving facilities, the Legislature authorized reimbursement for leased as well as constructed facilities in 1987. This enabled RESCs to quickly create programs by leasing space rather than waiting for construction. When districts are no longer in need of programs, leasing space makes it easier to disengage from programs.
6. Funding for lease reimbursement has been reduced from 1.6 million to 800,000.

For these reasons, on behalf of the RESC Alliance, I ask for your support of Raised Bill #5825 to help address funding that is critical to the successful operations of Connecticut's six Regional Educational Service Centers.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce E. Douglas, Ph.D.
Capitol Region Education Council