

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Education Committee
March 23, 2009

**TESTIMONY OF
MARK K. MCQUILLAN, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION**

ON

RAISED BILL 6687

ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

The Department of Education supports Raised Bill 6687 which seeks to make some minor revisions to the education statutes.

Section 1 of the bill proposes to make the Department of Education's annual report to the General Assembly concerning charter schools a biennial rather than annual report. Currently, the Department is required to annually report to the General Assembly on the operation of charter schools. The statute requires that this report address four issues: (1) an assessment of the adequacy of funding for charter schools; (2) adequacy and availability of suitable facilities; (3) statutory changes facilitating expansion of the number of charter schools; and (4) a compilation of school profiles. Items (1) through (3) may result in potential increases to the state appropriation. Since the legislature does not ordinarily address such funding issues during the second year of the biennium, the proposal is to provide that the report be submitted every other year so that its

submission is concurrent with the preparation of the state biennial budget. This report was last submitted in June 2008.

Section 2 of the bill proposes to eliminate the requirement that each local and regional board of education participating in the school breakfast grant program submit a financial statement of expenditures to the Department on or before September first of each fiscal year and instead provides that such submission be made at such time and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education. The section also specifies that if the Commissioner finds that any school breakfast grant recipient has used grant dollars for purposes which are not in conformity with the purposes of this statute, the Commissioner shall, rather than may, require repayment to the state. In accordance with § 210.19(a)(2) in the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Code of Federal Regulations for the National School Lunch Program, the Department requires all school districts participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs to submit an Annual Revenue and Expenditure Report. These reports are reviewed and if a district demonstrates that they have exceeded three months' operating expenses, they are required to submit corrective action on how they will expend these excess funds. Since the report reflects *all* income and expenses for *all* schools related to the Child Nutrition Programs, the School Breakfast Program funding is part of this report. Therefore, the submission of two reports, one for the entire program and one for the state School Breakfast Program are unnecessary and duplicative.

Section 3 of the bill proposes to update the statutory terminology that refers to the state's technical high schools. Several years ago the State Board of Education renamed the regional vocational-technical schools to be "technical high schools" in order to more accurately reflect the programs that are offered in that school system. This proposal is to update the statutes to conform to that change.

Section 4 of the bill seeks to include Unified School District 2 in the transfer of student records requirement of Section 10-220h of the General Statutes. The Department supports this change but suggests that the proposed language requiring notifying the old school within 48 hours of enrollment at the new school be changed to require notification "within two school days."

Section 5 of the bill requires the State Board of Education to adopt regulations to increase the qualifications for school nurses. The Department supports this proposal for new school nurses as the health needs of students have changed dramatically since the current regulations were written over 20 years ago and new school nurses need increased qualifications to ensure high quality, safe care for students. The Department is concerned however that not allowing current school nurses to be grandfathered in under the old law could seriously deplete the state's school nurse workforce. In addition, the proposed language fails to require that each school nurse be a registered nurse, designated as an RN or APRN and holding a valid nursing license in the State of Connecticut.

As laid out above, the Department generally supports all of the proposed revisions to Raised Bill 6687 and urges its adoption.