TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
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Robert L. Genuario
Secretary
Office of Policy and Management

Testimony Supporting Senate Bill No. 830 and House Bill No. 6370

AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING EDUCATION (SB 830) AND AN ACT CONCERNING A MIDDLE COLLEGE SYSTEM (HB 6370)

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and distinguished members of the Education Committee thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony on Senate Bill No. 830, An Act Concerning the Governor's Recommendations Regarding Education and House Bill No. 6370, An Act Concerning a Middle College System, as well as providing comments on the other bills being heard today.

SB 830 AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING EDUCATION.

This bill is necessary to implement the Governor's Budget. It keeps whole the major education grants even in these challenging economic times. In this fiscal climate it is necessary to limit spending and this bill does this by:

- Capping various grants at the FY09 level (Health Services for Pupils Private Schools, Non-Public Transportation, Adult Education, Public Transportation, Bilingual Education, Regional Education Services and Special Education).
- Funding the per student Magnet School grant at the same level as funded in FY09 and putting a moratorium on building any new Magnet Schools (except those that the Commissioner of Education deems would aid in meeting the goals of Sheff) until a statewide magnet school plan is approved by the Commissioner.
- Continuing the $8,346 preschool slot cost that was in statute for FY09, continuing the formula for the School Readiness grant beyond FY09, changing the administrative funding that is retained by the Department of Education (SDE) to 1% of the grant, providing additional time for School Readiness providers to get a BA level teacher in every classroom and continuing the Early Childhood Education Cabinet in an advisory capacity only.
- Continuing to fund the Charter School per student grant at the FY09 level ($9,300).
- Delaying the mandate that all suspensions be in-school suspensions until July 1, 2011.

- Transferring OPEN Choice administration from the Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to SDE effective July 1, 2010.
- Decreasing the Healthy Foods Reimbursement for schools from $0.10 per meal to $0.05 per meal.
- Providing towns with the same ECS entitlement for FY10 and FY11 that they were eligible for in FY09.
- Requiring that the constituent units of the state system of higher education fully participate in CORE-CT for position establishment and refill processes and would provide that no new position shall be created and not vacancies filled without OPM approval.
- Providing the Governor with some flexibility in changing education grants appropriations in order to maximize federal funding available to the state through the stimulus package.
- Eliminating grants that are not considered essential to the mission of the Department of Education in these challenging economic times (Primary Mental Health and RESC Leases).
- Eliminating the Connecticut Career Ladder Advisory Committee and the Adult Literacy Council.

HB 6370 AN ACT CONCERNING A MIDDLE COLLEGE SYSTEM.

This bill would create a new Middle College System which will combine the considerable talents of the Technical High Schools (THS) and the Community Colleges (CC), with staff and consultation provided by the Office for Workforce Competitiveness (OWC). This new system will institutionalize the partnerships that currently exist between OWC and the THS and CCs. The Middle College System will provide students with more career paths to the 48% (Holzer, Lerman 2007) of today's jobs that "require more than high school but less than a four year degree." The THS and CC systems are similar; they share common educational programs, they are vibrant partners in major Connecticut cities and they provide educational opportunities for high numbers of minority students, whose academic success Connecticut needs for its economic future. Coordinating the education and workforce missions of these two large education systems will provide Connecticut with the potential to grow significant numbers of skilled workers.

The Middle College System will expand the traditional high school experience in the THS to include the possibility of college level training in the CCs. THS students, many of whom are disadvantaged, will be able to earn college credits while still in high school. Programs such as healthcare, fuel cell technology and optics, which have growing workforce needs, will be aligned with THS curricula so high school students will have access to the programs both at the THS and CC levels. At the same time, with the assistance of the OWC, the state's workforce needs will be incorporated into new training and education opportunities at both the high school and college levels in the Middle College System. For instance, OWC will assist in the expansion of training for new green jobs. A shortage of skills and training is impeding the growth of jobs in renewable energy (solar panel installation) and energy efficiency (making buildings more energy

efficient). With OWC's guidance, the Middle College System will respond to the workforce needs of the state's economy.