



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106-1658

**Senate Bill 379
An Act Concerning Vocational-Technical Schools**

**Education Committee
March 8, 2010**

As the agency responsible for the purchase of supplies, materials, equipment and contractual services for state agencies, the Department of Administrative Services ("DAS") offers the following testimony concerning Senate Bill 379, An Act Concerning Vocational-Technical Schools.

Under existing law, agencies must use statewide contracts established by DAS and DOIT for their purchases.¹ Section 9 of Senate Bill 379, however, would permit the superintendent of the regional vocational technical school system to purchase supplies, materials, equipment and contractual services independent of DAS under certain circumstances. Specifically, a vocational technical school would not have to use a statewide contract provided it can purchase from a business in the town in which the school seeking the goods or services is located at a lower cost than the cost of buying such goods or services through DAS, or if the goods and services cannot be obtained through DAS.

DAS believes that the existing procedures provide the best method to ensure a fair, open and competitive procurement process for the protection of the taxpayers. The existing requirement that all agencies - including the vocational technical schools - purchase their goods and services off of statewide contracts negotiated and awarded by DAS and DOIT serves many goals:

- It ensures a fair, open and competitive procurement process;
- It enables the state to leverage volume commitments to obtain better pricing than is offered through retail purchases;
- It gives the state the ability to lock-in prices for a specific period of time -- something most retailers cannot guarantee;

¹ One exception to this rule is when the goods/services are less than \$50,000 and there is no statewide contract in place. In these situations, agencies are permitted to use their delegated purchasing authority to purchase necessary goods or services from vendors that do not have contracts with the state.

- It allows the state to obtain product warranties, guarantees, delivery and additional legal protections, which most retailers do not offer to walk-in customers; and
- It allows agencies to spend their time and resources on their core business, instead of "shopping around."

Moreover, the existing requirement that agencies purchase off of established contracts ensures that the ethics rules, anti-discrimination contract requirements, and other statutes that are designed to prevent kick-backs, influence trading, etc. are followed. It is simply not possible or practical to have every retailer provide the certifications and affidavits that contractors are required to execute under existing statutes. Mandating that all agencies use established contracts also reinforces other legislatively-enacted standards, such as the purchase of recycled goods and energy-efficient goods.

DAS respectfully submits that exempting the vocational technical schools from utilizing DAS and DOIT statewide contracts undermines all of these policy goals.

Thank you for considering DAS's views on this bill. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact DAS's legislative liaison, Andrea Keilty (713-5267).