

**Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
March 1, 2010**

Testimony of Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner of Education

ON

Raised Bills 5165 and 266

Raised Bill 5165: AN ACT CONCERNING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

The Department supports Raised Bill 5165 which seeks to amend the current high school graduation requirements proposed as a part of the Connecticut Plan-- the Secondary School Reform plan adopted by the State Board of Education. The proposal in this bill aligns with the state's Race to the Top application which requires all districts who sign on to the state's application as a participating district to begin taking the necessary steps to implement the Connecticut Plan so that the full set of revised graduation requirements proposed in this bill will be fully implemented by the class of 2018. If Connecticut wants to continue to be a leader in education and expects to build the educated workforce its economy desperately needs, adoption of this bill is critical.

This bill seeks to amend the graduation credit requirements so that all students would be required to earn twenty-five credits to graduate, up from the current requirement of twenty. Within this credit-requirement, students will be required to complete specific courses in three academic clusters: 1) Science, technology, engineering and mathematics ("STEM"); 2) humanities; and 3) career and life skills courses. Within the STEM cluster, the math and science course credit requirements will be increased and all students will be required to take algebra I, geometry, a life science course and a physical science course. In addition, all students would be required to take two credits in world languages, however, the bill allows for students to earn these credits in middle school, through online coursework, or through the completion of a private course and successful completion of an examination. The proposed revised graduation requirements in this bill also require students to complete a Capstone experience in their senior year.

Of note, the Connecticut Plan adopted by the State Board not only includes these revised graduation requirements and senior course demonstration project that is proposed in this bill but it also requires student success plans and end-of-course examinations in certain subject areas. We believe that these are important aspects of the Plan which should be incorporated into Raised Bill 5165 as well. In fact, the Department has put forth a proposal to the Education Committee that incorporates *all* of the provisions of the Connecticut Plan, into Connecticut's accountability statute, section 10-223e.

The Race to the Top grant competition has provided the state with a vehicle to help participating districts who have signed on to our state's application to adopt and

implement the complete Connecticut Plan, in two phases over a period of eight years. In Part I, districts will work with the Department and external partners (SERC, the RESC Alliance, CAPSS, CAS, CABE, CEA, AFT and higher education) to implement the initial or foundational work needed to effectuate the changes called for in the Plan, including the hiring of additional mathematics and science teachers, in anticipation of the new core curriculum. In Part II, participating districts will complete the work needed to staff their schools and prepare teachers for implementing the full set of graduation requirements for the class of 2018—students who are now in 4th grade.

A key component of the preparation work in Part I will be the development of family and student support programs needed to sustain the thousands of students who will enroll in middle and high school unprepared for the new graduation requirements proposed in this bill. These support systems will include specific program interventions to prevent students from dropping out of high school, as well as others providing summer and after school remediation in literacy, mathematics, language acquisition, and more. Teachers and principals will be required to learn how best to intervene with such learners throughout the course of implementing the changes anticipated with the Connecticut Plan.

As such, we strongly support Raised Bill 5165 as it is an important step to encourage all school districts to make progress in improving our secondary schools and to prepare Connecticut students to be “college ready” and “work force ready.”

RAISED BILL 266: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING TRANSFERRING ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO THE COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

Raised Bill 266 seeks to require the Board of Trustees of the Community-Technical Colleges, in consultation with the Commissioners of Education and Higher Education and the superintendent of the Connecticut Technical High School System, to examine the feasibility of transferring the adult education programs currently administered by the State Board of Education to the Community-Technical College System. The Department does not oppose this concept but cautions that such a transfer would likely result in very little cost savings for the state.

The adult education programs offered by the State Board of Education are those administered the Connecticut Technical High School System. These programs currently include course offerings in Aviation Maintenance Technician (2 locations), Certified Nurse Assistant, Dental Assistant, Medical Assistant, Surgical Technician, and the Apprenticeship and Bilingual programs. The transfer of these programs to the Community-Technical Colleges would require a number of personnel transfers (approximately 12 full-time and 5 part-time general fund positions) as well as equipment transfers. In addition, some of these programs utilize the facilities of the technical high schools that the Community-Technical Colleges do not currently have access to, such as the Aviation Maintenance Technician program.