3/4/11

The CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) which represents all of the superintendents of schools in the state along with many members of superintendents cabinets has the following positions on the following bills that will be heard by the Education Committee on 3/7/11.

S.B. No. 1106 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

CAPSS applauds the value expressed by this bill for attention at the state level to the development and education of young children. We are supportive of universal pre-kindergarten programs and other measures that need to be taken to help children who need help during their early and in many ways most formative years.

While CAPSS has no quarrel with the establishment of a Department of Early Education and Child Development, we want to make sure that the establishment of such a department does **NOT** do the following.

- Require local school systems that offer pre-kindergarten programs to answer to one state department for those programs and to the State Department of Education for all of its other programs. Whenever local agencies have to answer to more than one state agency, the probability of program incoherence is high.

- Hinder the development by local districts of a seamless web of programs for children from the age of three to when they graduate from high school. For the most part, the present situation is one in which programs that serve children before they enter kindergarten are not well articulated with programs at the kindergarten level and beyond. This does not serve children well. There is an increasing interest at the local level, therefore, to establish well articulated programs that begin to serve children well before they reach the kindergarten entrance age and that proceed seamlessly into the programs offered in the primary grades. If school systems have to relate to one state agency for their pre-kindergarten programs and to the State Department of Education for

primary grade programs, the development of seamless early childhood and primary grade programs would be hindered.

H.B. No. 6498 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

CAPSS generally supports the revision of the implementation schedule for the actions called for by Section 10-111 of state statutes, the Section that has been referred to as the reform legislation that was enacted in 2010. Many of the actions called for by that Section require expenditures for implementation and it had been hoped when the Section was enacted that CT would receive a federal Race To The Top (RTTT) grant to cover the cost of those expenditures. Unfortunately, CT did not receive an RTTT grant so at this point, the implementation of many of the Section 10-111 provisions amounts to an unfunded state mandate.

For this reason, those who helped the then Co-Chairs of the Education Committee along with the Co-Chairs themselves reached an agreement to the effect that the implementation schedule would have to be revised if CT did not receive an RTTT Grant and the state did not appropriate for the reforms an amount that would cover the cost of implementation. H.B. 6498 reflects that agreement.

Having said this, CAPSS supports the following exceptions to the general revisions contained in the bill.

- There is little reason to postpone the development and implementation of new guidelines for programs that evaluate the performance of teachers and administrators. For the most part, this is a no cost item. In addition, the integration of student achievement with the evaluation programs for educators is long overdue.

- If the implementation of new guidelines for educator evaluation is not postponed, the development of the data system that is designed to support the new evaluation guidelines and the programs that will be implemented in accordance with those guidelines cannot be postponed. Without that data system, therefore, CT will continue to have to live with a

less consistent and coherent usage of student achievement in the evaluation of educators. As I said above, we have lived with this kind of situation for too long.

Please note, however, that the development and implementation of this data system will require funds that are not now available at either the state of local level. It is imperative, therefore, for the Legislature to approve the Governor's request for funds to develop and implement the data system.

- The Board Examination Program is one that is voluntary for local school districts. Some school districts are already moving toward the implementation of this Program. If those school districts are to proceed with implementation on schedule, the alteration of the high school graduation requirements that is found in Section 10-111 cannot be postponed. The requirement alteration, therefore, should not be postponed.

CAPSS is particularly supportive of the Board Examination Program because it embodies a noticeable shift in graduation requirements from seat time to competence. This is a shift that we think should take place.

CAPSS' final comment on this Bill expresses support and appreciation for the Bill's call for the establishment of a task force on the changes specified in Section 10-111 for high school graduation requirements. CAPSS is particularly appreciative of the fact that not only would a CAPSS representative serve on the task force but that the CAPSS representative would be the chairperson of the task force. CAPSS is engaged in the development of a blueprint for transforming education in CT which is scheduled to be published by 9/1/11. We can, therefore, bring to the leadership and work of the task force current thinking on the issues of standards, accountability and graduation requirements.

Thank you for considering the CAPSS positions. I would be happy to discuss any of this with any member of the Committee.

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"The mission of CAPSS is to lead the continuous improvement of public education for all students by advocating public policy for children, and by developing and supporting executive school leaders"