



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee
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HB 6432 AN ACT CONCERNING CLOSING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAP
HB 6431 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT
HB 6421 AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND THE ALLOCATION OF COSTS TO MEMBER TOWNS
HB 6422 AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPORTATION AND TUITION COSTS OF STUDENTS
HB 6420 AN ACT PROHIBITING SCHOOL DISTRICTS FROM CHARGING UNIVERSAL, NON-REFUNDABLE STUDENT FEES

CABE is supportive of many of the provisions in HB 6432, An Act Concerning Closing the Academic Achievement Gap, which continues to focus attention on Connecticut's academic achievement gap. However, we are very concerned about the requirement in section 8 that all priority school districts make school readiness spaces available for all eligible children and provide full-day kindergarten to all children in the district. This requirement has serious cost implications both in terms of staffing and facilities. In light of the proposed reduction in the priority school district grant and the reduced reimbursement for new construction, we urge you to reject this requirement unless resources are available to implement this new mandate.

HB 6431, An Act Concerning the Minimum Budget Requirement. CABE supports the maintenance of a strong minimum budget requirement, as this is the only mechanism that ensures that the education cost sharing grant remains an education grant rather than general municipal aid. This bill creates the opportunity for a reduced minimum budget requirement through a process that would require the review and approval by the Commissioner of Education. It provides for the reduction in a district budgeted appropriation in an amount equal to "savings" achieved in a variety of mechanisms. It would be virtually impossible to specifically identify the savings in the variety of circumstances that are included, which include cooperative arrangements to provide school accommodation services, programs or activities, special education services, health care services, joint purchasing, as well as "any other budgeted efficiencies approved by the Commissioner". Given the multiple years of flat funding of the education cost sharing grant - and therefore a level minimum budget requirement - in a time where local costs has continued to increase, any cost savings districts are able to achieve are necessary in order to preserve existing educational programs. Therefore, CABE opposes this bill.

HB 6421, An Act Concerning Regional School Districts and the Allocation of Costs to Member Towns. CABE opposes this bill which changes the method of allocating regional school district costs to a three year average of enrollment. The current annual calculation provides a more accurate allocation of costs.

HB 6422, An Act Concerning Transportation and Tuition Costs of Students. This bill is broadly drafted and addresses access to education for students unable to attend a particular school because of a health condition. Legislation is unnecessary, since existing federal law, both the American with Disabilities Act Title II and section 504 already covers the rights of students in such a situation. Therefore, CABE opposes this bill.

HB 6420, An Act Prohibiting School Districts from Charging Universal, Non-Refundable Student Fees. As drafted, this bill prohibits charging fees to students who do not participate in any non-required athletic or extracurricular activities. CAFE has no position on this bill in its current form, but we strongly urge you to avoid expanding the language to a general prohibition on student activity fees. As you are well aware, districts only enact these fees in order to save student activities that would otherwise have to be eliminated due to budget constraints.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.