



**CGA Education Committee
Public Hearing February 28, 2011
HB 6431 AAC The Minimum Budget Requirement
HB 6432 AAC Closing The Academic Achievement Gap
Comments Submitted by Katherine Wilson, School Finance Specialist**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to comment today on HB 6431 and HB 6432.

HB 6431 – The League does not support this bill. We believe a minimum budget requirement for 2012 of no less than the amount budgeted for 2009, three years prior, would reasonably take into account both current fiscal conditions across the state and any savings generated by the items listed in subdivision (2) against the rising cost of goods and services purchased by school districts. Furthermore, we are concerned that the actual savings generated through health plan changes, interdistrict cooperation, regionalization, joint purchasing, and “other budgetary efficiencies” would be extremely difficult to document and that administering these provisions would place an additional burden on both the State Department of Education and local districts for which for which they are receiving no additional funding.

HB 6432 – The League applauds the basic notion of establishing an ongoing task force charged with developing a comprehensive, statewide master plan to eliminate the academic achievement gap by 2020. We do, however, have concerns about specific aspects of the bill:

Section 1 – The task force should include representatives from local school districts of all sizes and demographic characteristics. It should also be required to report annually and publicly to the Education Committee on the implementation of the master plan, rather than just receiving periodic reports internally from the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap as currently proposed in Section 2(b)(3).

Sections 3 and 5 – Are there adequate resources within SDE’s 2012 budget to develop the model Pre-K to grade 4 curricula in reading and mathematics specified in Section 3 and to establish the Cultural Resource Center envisioned in Section 5?

Section 4 – The additional accountability reporting requirements placed on districts with achievement gaps are supported by no additional funding. What constitutes a reportable achievement gap should be more precisely defined.

Section 8 – Despite the addition of \$1.16 million for school readiness in each year of the governor’s proposed budget, the requirement that priority school districts provide universal school readiness spaces and full-day kindergarten by 2013 appears onerous in light of the proposed \$4.64 million and \$5.12 million reductions to the PSD grant.

Thank you again for your consideration of our ideas on these important pieces of legislation.