



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

81 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109-1242 - (860) 571-7446 - Fax (860) 571-7452 - Email admin@cabe.org

**Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee
March 7, 2011**

**HB 6502 AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM
SB 1103 AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
HB 6498 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL DISTRICTS
HB 6499 AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES
HB 6500 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT**

CABE supports the provisions in section 3 of HB 6502, An Act Concerning the Open Choice Program, which provides additional incentives to districts receiving significant numbers of students under the Open Choice program. The tiered funding formula based upon participation will help the state meet the participation benchmarks in the Sheff settlement agreement. The current grant of \$2,500 per pupil is clearly insufficient, given the average per pupil expenditure of \$13,600 in the region. The Open Choice Program is the most cost effective method of meeting the court ordered settlement agreement in the Sheff case, and should be the highest priority for additional funding.

SB 1103 An Act Concerning Early Childhood Education. CABE is extremely supportive of opportunities to expand access to quality preschool programs for all needy students, regardless of where they live. However, we are concerned that a mandate requiring districts to provide preschool will not be accompanied by the appropriate resources. At this time of serious fiscal constraints at both the local and state level, such a mandate is likely to cause the reduction in other necessary educational programs which are also designed to close the achievement gap.

CABE supports the provisions of HB 6498, An Act Concerning School Districts, which would delay the implementations of certain aspects of the secondary school reform legislation. This legislation was passed in anticipation of receiving federal funds to support its implementation. All of the discussions related to the secondary school reform indicated that resources were necessary for successful implementation. Therefore, it is critical that full implementation be delayed until those resources are available. At the present time both the State Department of Education and local districts lack the capacity to successfully implement this law.

CABE supports the provisions in section 16 of HB 6499, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes, which would establish May 1 as the deadline for boards of education to notify non-tenure teachers that their contracts may not be renewed. This is particularly important as boards deal with budget reductions. Providing one additional month for school district to provide non tenured teachers with notice of possible non-renewal will allow boards of education to have a clearer fiscal picture and reduce the number of unwarranted non-renewal notices. Insurance of non-renewal notices has a significant negative impact on the morale and functioning of the school districts.

CABE opposes the requirement in section 21 that the State Board of Education define "excused absences" and "unexcused absences" these are issues that are addressed with local board policy and should remain so.

HB 6500 An Act Concerning Educational Achievement. CABE is concerned that the requirement in section 3 for a union system, of accounting for school expenditures will interfere with local budgeting practices and make it difficult for districts to make comparisons with previous years.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.