

Madam Chair [Slossberg], Vice –Chair [Meyer], members of the committee:

Good morning. My name is David Wedge. I am here to provide comment on Bill 1010 as it relates to the school construction grant program. I basically support those components but am offering suggestions.

Until this past summer I had been employed by the State of Connecticut for over 30 years; the last 27 years with the Department of Education within the Bureau of School Facilities. Since about 1992 (almost 20 years) I was the manager of the school construction grant program.

I ask two things regarding my testimony:

1. I am here as David Wedge, private citizen. Please understand that I am not in any way representing the State Department of Education;
2. That my testimony not be viewed as being opposed to the bill, but rather of being supportive of the bill with recommended modifications.

In light of the current economy I agree that the School Construction Grant program should be modified. There are many of the modifications proposed in this bill make sense. However, in my professional opinion, there are two components of the proposed bill that my recommendation to senior management would be to not include. They are

- Sec 57 Reversing the restriction of grant eligibility of fee increases of project managers and construction managers ;
- Sec 39 Transfer of the operational function of the program from the Department of Education to the proposed new Department of Construction Services which is the focus of my discussion.

I want to emphasize that this is a state grant program, not a state construction program. While the State is providing financial assistance for construction projects, the state is not actually constructing these facilities. These actual construction projects are municipal endeavors. In the delivery and management of this multi-billion dollar grant program, including the financial projections and verification of compliance with the accessibility laws and regulations based on the academic program, the Bureau of School Facilities must rely upon, and routine interact with other bureaus within the Department of Education. These include:

- The Bureau of Grants Processing who actually calculate and pay the individual grants to cities and towns based on the data provided and certified by the Bureau of School Facilities;
- The Office of Legal and Governmental Affairs whose guidance and advice is routinely sought regarding interpretation of education law and state policy;
- The Bureau of Information Technology who has the computer programming knowledge and skills required to maintain and modify as needed the extensive computer programs created for the on-line data collection and the in-house management of project data;
- Office of Internal Audit who audits every individual project;
- Multiple SDE program offices regarding programmatic aspects of proposed projects for grant applicability;
 - Vocational agriculture ;
 - Interdistrict magnets;

- Sheff Office
- Special Education

If the Bureau is relocated to the new agency, I question the efficiency, efficacy, and possibly the overall ability, to provide the fiscal and educational programmatic management responsibilities still required under remaining state and federal laws.

I would also like to note that in the past 27 years, under the Department of Education, although there have been minor differences of interpretation of the law as it applies to individual projects or with towns unable to document the data they provided, there has not been any major "front page" news fodder regarding the implementation of this program. The Department of Education has managed and implemented the school construction grant program well and in accordance with established laws. I'm not stating this to pat myself on the back. Rather, my intent is to state that this major state grant program, one that is driven by a myriad of laws and regulations which are modified most every year in some manner by the legislature, has been successfully implemented due to the many professionals within the Department of Education, across many bureaus, who interface daily addressing project questions and issues.

Can and should the program be modified? Absolutely.

Are there many good things in this proposed bill that should be implemented? Absolutely.

Should the Bureau of School Facilities be transferred from the Department of Education to a newly formed Department of Construction Services? I do not recommend it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.