

TESTIMONY OF
GEORGE A. COLEMAN, ACTING COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

ON

RAISED BILLS 927, 928, 6054, 6321

**RAISED BILL 927: AN ACT CONCERNING REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATORS**

The State Department of Education (CSDE) supports S.B. No. 927, *AAC Requirements for Early Childhood Educators*, to revise the requirements for early childhood educators in state funded preschool programs and redirect School Readiness Grant unexpended funds for providing professional development toward a bachelor's degree to early childhood preschool staff in programs receiving state funds, with some suggested minor revisions.

Section on Requirements for Early Childhood Educators

Current law requires that by 2015 School Readiness classrooms are staffed with teachers who hold: (1) a bachelor's degree from an accredited higher education institution in early childhood education, child development, or a related commissioner-approved field; or (2) a teaching certificate with a special education or early childhood endorsement.

This current target standard cannot be reached given: (1) the insufficient numbers of four-year Early Childhood Education (ECE) degree programs; and (2) the time it takes for those pursuing these degrees to complete their program. Also, the current law is not broad enough to include all state funded preschool programs, such as Head Start or Department of Social Services Child Care Programs.

This standard targeted for a single state funded grant program (School Readiness) does not address the entire state funded preschool system workforce and the children and families in all such programs who equally deserve highly qualified staff. We have seen progress in the numbers of teachers in the School Readiness Grant funded programs holding a bachelor's degree or master's degree increase from 46% of teachers in 2010 to 54% of teachers in 2011 grant year. Even with an 8% increase over last year, this single state funded grant program has much further to go in meeting the current legislative requirement.

This section of the bill seeks to remedy these problems by revising the staff requirements in 3 phases:

1. Prior to July 15, 2015, require that there is an individual in each classroom who has at least:
 - a. a childhood development associate credential or equivalent credential and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or childhood development from an accredited Institution of Higher Education; or,
 - b. an associate's degree with at least 12 credits in early childhood education or childhood development; or,

- c. a four-year degree with at least 12 credits in early childhood education or childhood development; or,
 - d. a certification with an endorsement in early childhood.
2. On or after July 1, 2015, require that for each preschool program accepting state funds (including School Readiness funds and funds from the Department of Social Services) at least half of those individuals with the primary responsibility for a group of children:
- a. Hold certification with an endorsement in early childhood; or,
 - b. Hold a Bachelor's degree or Master's degree in early childhood education, child study, child development or human growth and development from an accredited Institution of Higher Education.

The other half of those individuals are required to hold an Associate's degree in early childhood education, child study, child development or human growth and development.

3. On and after July 1, 2020, require that for each preschool program accepting state funds (including School Readiness funds and funds from the Department of Social Services) one hundred percent of those individuals with the primary responsibility for a group of children:
- a. Hold a Bachelor's degree or Master's degree in early childhood education, child study, child development or human growth and development from an accredited Institution of Higher Education.

While some may see the revised staffing requirements proposed in this bill as a step backwards, this bill actually raises the current standards for all teachers in community-based child care settings and public schools accepting state-funded School Readiness, Head Start, and/or DSS Child Care funds to an *attainable* standard in a realistic timeframe.

As such, CSDE supports this section of Raised Bill 927, with the following suggested minor revisions:

- Head Start should be added to the listing of state funding sources;
- Under subsection (B), the programs mentioned only need to be offered by institutions accredited by the Department of Higher Education. However, the Commissioner's of Education and Higher Education should approve the programs, as this will allow for specific requirements that assure quality in coursework and field experiences.
- That the percentages listed within this section be re-examined with the agencies funding early childhood programs.

Section on Unexpended School Readiness Funds

This section of the bill seeks to redirect unexpended School Readiness funds for providing professional development to preschool staff in state funded programs as an incentive for staff to obtain their Bachelor's degree.

CSDE supports the intent of this section of Raised Bill 927, with the following suggested revisions:

- The year that is noted in section (B) should be changed to refer to carryover of funds from the previous fiscal year. School Readiness funds expire at the end of each year and therefore a year will be needed for sufficient funds to accrue for distribution.
- Carry over language should be added for subsequent years.
- Suggest striking the language pertaining to “the local school readiness programs shall use such funds”. Since these funds are to be used for all state funded preschool staff, CSDE suggests that the language be broadened to include such programs and the agencies funding each program would work together to determine who and how funds would be disseminated.

RAISED BILL 928: AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER PREPARATION

The State Department of Education (CSDE) opposes S.B. No. 928, *AAC Teacher Preparation*, which seeks to require that the Department of Higher Education conduct a study of issues concerning teacher preparation and training requirements and alternative routes to certification in early childhood education.

CSDE is the agency currently tasked with the authority to review and approve both traditional teacher preparation programs and alternate routes to certification. The training requirements for teacher preparation programs are determined in regulations. In December the State Board of Education gave final approval to revised regulations on this very issue after nearly three years of debate. It seems wasteful and unnecessary for the Department of Higher Education (DHE) to conduct a study after the CSDE has spent years examining this very issue and engaging in debate with stakeholders.

If a study on these issues must occur, CSDE would be the appropriate agency to conduct this study, not the DHE. Please note, however, that as currently drafted Section 1 of the bill actually requires that a study be conducted regarding the training requirements for *all* professors in public institutions of higher education; not just teacher preparation programs.

Similarly, CSDE is also tasked as the leading agency to accredit the alternate routes to certification (ARC) as appropriate teacher preparation organizations. Therefore, it would also be the appropriate agency to study these issues. Further, given that the DHE actually operates an ARC, there exists an inherent conflict of interest for the DHE to complete this study.

As such, the CSDE does not support S.B. No. 928 as written.

RAISED BILL 6054: ACT CONCERNING THE TRACKING OF UNIQUE IDENTIFIERS BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The State Department of Education (CSDE) strongly supports Raised Bill 6054, An Act Concerning the Tracking of Unique Identifiers by Institutions of Higher Education which seeks to require each public institution of higher education and each independent institution of higher education that receives state funding to track the unique identifiers, which are assigned by the Department of Education to public school students.

As part of our ARRA State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) application, CSDE is required to implement all 12 elements of the America's COMPETES Act by September 2011. The capacity to communicate with higher education data systems is one of those elements.

In June 2010, CSDE instructed school districts to include the SASID on their high school transcript. This is not a legislated requirement, but a directive from the CSDE given the SFSF requirement. The public higher education institutions in the State subsequently agreed to take the SASID from the transcript and enter it into their own student information systems.

With that said, in addition to the above provisions, the CSDE seeks to include an additional provision to require the inclusion of the SASID on each student's high school transcript and require each public institution of higher education and each independent institution of higher education that receives state funding to obtain the SASID from the high school transcript and enter it into their respective student information systems.

RAISED BILL 6321: AN ACT CONCERNING A COLLEGE TRANSITION PILOT PROGRAM

The State Department of Education (CSDE) opposes H.B. No. 6321, *AAC A College Transition Pilot Program*, to establish a pilot program to offer college preparatory classes at three programs of adult classes for adults who have obtained their high school diploma or its equivalent and require intensive postsecondary developmental education.

Currently, the adult education state grant appropriation supports local and regional boards of education to uphold Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-69 which requires each local and regional board of education to establish and maintain a program of adult classes. Instruction is mandated in Americanization and United States citizenship, English for adults with limited English proficiency and elementary and secondary school completion programs or classes.

The very limited adult education resources target those most in need (i.e. individuals without a high school diploma and those with limited English proficiency). The current appropriation has been insufficient to advance the educational outcomes of this population. According to Census 2000 there are over 400,000 residents in the State without a high school diploma and the current local, state and federal support system for adult education is only able to serve 30,000 residents annually. Furthermore, in each

year since 2003-04 when the state adult education appropriation was capped, requests for state funds from local and regional boards of education has exceeded the available state funds.

The CSDE would not be adverse to this bill if an additional appropriation was made available to support a pilot adult education program of college preparatory classes for adults who have obtained their high school diploma or its equivalent and require intensive postsecondary developmental education.

Therefore, the CSDE does not support H.B. No. 6321 as written because it would rely on limited adult education resources to serve a *new* target population.