



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2011

S.B. No. 930 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE AGE.

Recommend approval of the bill as written. The bill would change kindergarten age beginning 7/1/12 so that much younger (4 year olds) and older (7 year olds) would not be starting school at the same time. Right now, schools have a tough time teaching kids who can range in age from 4.5 to 7 years. SDE would like additional School Readiness funding for students in poorest communities so they could get the additional preschool year in this transition period. Since there is no recommended funding for this, we should oppose this if it is added to the bill.

H.B. No. 6326 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RESPONSE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT.

This is the right thing to do-school personnel, including prospective teachers, should be vetted to make sure they do not have a history of abusing children. For administrative flexibility-both from the local school district and State Department of Education perspective-inquiries to the Child Abuse Registry should be available electronically. If they are not, the bill's implementation should be tied to availability of electronic data sharing.

S.B. No. 933 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS.

This allows a superintendent of local schools to request that the bachelor's degree requirement for substitute teachers be waived. SDE is fine with this if limited. Neutral for OPM; no fiscal impact expected.

H.B. No. 6319 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS FOR KOREAN WAR VETERANS.

There are Korean War veterans who left high school to serve their country. As we have done for similar groups of World War II veterans, it seems a fitting tribute to allow a local board of education to award these folks their high school diplomas (albeit sixty years later).

H.B. No. 6324 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER EMPLOYMENT CRITERIA.

This bill would require, for school districts which do not have layoff provisions in their contracts, to develop layoff procedures which do not put seniority as the primary reason for determining who gets retained and who gets laid off. While this appears to

be consistent with some of Governor Malloy's statements on this subject, it does also touch on an arbitration ruling (for Hartford) that was released on 2/17/11. The Hartford superintendent sought empowerment to lay off more senior teachers while retaining less senior educators in specialty schools. According to the *Hartford Courant*, "a three-member state arbitration panel said it believed that such a system would give school principals too much power in deciding which teachers to lay off, including those with tenure."

H.B. No. 6325 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE REENTRY AND EDUCATION.

The issue here is one of safety. While every student has a constitutional right to a free and appropriate public education, there are instances when the student could be a danger to himself or others if he attends a regular public school. This bill requires juveniles who come right out of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) to be immediately admitted to their former high school, even if it is not the most appropriate or safe option. The SDE is correct that a more judicious approach is needed-not to exclude these students from their rightful educations-but to make sure the setting is the most appropriate one for the student, his peers and other school personnel.

H.B. No. 6385 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION.

Going forward, some language might require additional tweaking. For instance, the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) might need adjusting depending on final education budget.

S.B. No. 932 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF SEVERE NEED SCHOOL FOR PURPOSES OF THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST GRANT PROGRAM.

As written, this bill has problems and could be more of a disincentive for districts to participate in the School Breakfast program (and it could eliminate current participants from the program due to onerous reporting requirements). Suggest significant re-write with fiscal impact statement done for state and towns.

S.B. No. 929 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS OF SCHOOL NURSES.

This additional school nurse credentialing language, while important and well-meaning, could make it more difficult for school districts to attract and retain school nurses. In urban districts, particularly, and in many others as well, school nurses are primary care providers for students. They see the gamut-from child abuse to pregnancy to behavioral issues-in addition to the normal childhood sicknesses. There can be a lot of burnout and stress related to these jobs. Adding these academic and professional development requirements (especially with a 7/1/11 implementation) without giving time for the profession to adjust-could have the unintended consequence of driving experienced and caring health professionals out the schools in which they work.

H.B. No. 6320 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF HUMANE EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

Well-meaning but misplaced, this language would require the SDE, in consultation with animal welfare organizations, to develop curricula that teaches students about pets and empathy, if third party funding becomes available. This is really something the state should not be involved in-even if there is someone else paying the bill.

H.B. No. 6318 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DONATIONS OF EQUIPMENT TO THE REGIONAL VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SYSTEM.

This is really about indemnifying the donors of equipment to the RVTSS. While the bill contains provisions that limit the indemnification to the damages caused by the donated equipment, this bill, while helpful to the RVTSS, could end up causing the state to have to pay if some of the equipment has issues that were not clearly counted on.

S.B. No. 1025 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONERS FOR TECHNICAL REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

Appear to be technical and not substantive.