



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee
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**SB 877 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ENTRANCE AGE FOR WHEN A CHILD MAY ENTER
KINDERGARTEN
HB 6357 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR
CONCERNING EDUCATION
HB 6358 AN ACT UNLEASHING INNOVATION IN CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS**

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, members of the Education Committee, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education appreciates the opportunity to address several of the bills before you today.

While CABE does not have a position on the age of school entry, we support the fact that SB 877, An Act Concerning the Entrance Age for When a Child May Enter Kindergarten, provides a phase in and also preserves the opportunity for boards of education to enroll a child under five years of age. We strongly support the requirement in the bill that the Commissioner developed a plan to provide spaces in school readiness programs for those children who would no longer be eligible to enroll in kindergarten. A delay in the entry age without a corresponding increase in access to early childhood programs for needy children would have detrimental impact on their educational opportunities.

HB 6357, An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education, continues to demonstrate the Governor's strong support for education, despite the state's fiscal constraints. The economic challenges are faced at all levels of government, and felt most intensely at the local level during the current budget development and adoption season. Rising local costs, in addition to the increased expectations and related costs for implementation of Common Core State Standards, educator evaluation and support, and secondary school reform, will likely exceed the increases in the education cost sharing grant in all districts. For the Alliance Districts, the increase in ECS funding again comes with a requirement that the funds be expanded pursuant to a plan approved by the Commissioner. We urge you to insure that these districts have the flexibility to include support for existing initiatives in their plans.

In addition, the elimination of the transportation grant will have a significant impact on education budgets into the future, when the hold harmless provision expires. Connecticut, unlike some other states, provides that transportation is part of a student's right to a free public education, therefore districts must continue to provide the services. Similarly the continuation of the cap on the special education excess cost grant, which was designed as the safety net for local school districts facing extraordinary individual student special education costs, creates fiscal uncertainty at the local level.

CABE also urges you to address the issue of magnet school tuition for preschool students, and remove this obligation from local school districts. This creates a significant inequity, since districts are generally unable to offer preschool programs due to fiscal constraints.

We are concerned that the inclusion of PILOT funds in the ECS Grant will make application of the minimum

budget requirement increasingly difficult in future years, and we urge you to carefully examine the ramifications of this change.

CABE supports the concept in section 3 of HB 6358, An Act Unleashing Innovation in Connecticut Schools which provides for waivers from certain statutory requirements for high performing districts. We urge you to expand this language to include reduction in reporting requirements, and differentiated state oversight, as recommended by the Red Tape Task Force.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.