

**TESTIMONY OF CT ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ON HB 6358**

**JOSEPH J. CIRASUOLO, ED.D.**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) which represents the superintendents of CT's school districts and the members of the superintendents' cabinets supports the enactment of HB 6358 because it aligns well with the *portfolio approach* to school districts that CAPSS believes is a vital component for transforming education in the State.

A *portfolio approach* is one in which the State's relationship with school districts is dependent on the success of districts in their efforts to meet the State's expectations for student achievement. Successful districts would be given greater freedom from state mandates and regulations while districts that are not successful would be given greater support and direction.

By allowing successful districts to apply for permission to implement innovations that cannot be implemented now due to State requirements, HB 6358 is an important first step towards the implementation of a *portfolio approach* in CT.

CAPSS' support for this bill, however, is accompanied by a recommendation that the State Legislature consider seriously a revision of one State requirement that presently hinders the efforts of some school districts to be successful. That requirement is the one that compels districts to essentially base the awarding of high school diplomas on the amount of time students spend in class instead of how much students have achieved as a result of their school experience.

Presently, there are nine high schools in CT that are developing high school diploma criteria that are based on whether students have mastered the required knowledge and skills necessary for students to be successful beyond high school. These schools are members of the League of Innovative Schools which in turn is a member of the New England Council of Secondary Schools.

The staffs of these schools, one of which is a Commissioner's Network School, have concluded that for them to be successful, the transition to a mastery based diploma system is necessary. Yet, no matter how well they develop a mastery based diploma system, they will not be able to implement it in CT under present State statutes. So, they are being prevented from getting permission to be innovative because they are being innovative. This simply does not make sense.

CAPSS, therefore, urges that the Legislature in addition to enacting HB 6358 also enact legislation that will grant school districts that so desire to transition from diploma criteria based on Carnegie Units to criteria based on demonstration of mastery. CAPSS is prepared to recommend specific legislative language in this regard.