



Testimony of  
**Stephen McKeever, First Vice President**  
**AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO**

Education Committee  
March 1, 2013

**SB 998 AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL EDUCATION  
SERVICE CENTER BUDGETS**

**HB 6504 AN ACT CONCERNING ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

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Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischman and members of the Education Committee. My name is Steve McKeever and I am First Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of union of nearly 29,000 public and private sector employees including state employees, nurses, healthcare workers, teachers and other school personnel. I am here today to testify on two bills: SB 998, An Act Concerning Regional Educational Service Center Budgets and HB 6504 An Act Concerning Alternative School Programs.

**SB 998 An Act Concerning Regional Education Service Center Budgets**

Last week I testified in favor of a HB 5900 in the Government Administration and Elections Committee, which requires more transparency in education spending specifically targeting the contracting practices of the State Education Resource Center (SERC). SB 998 is an extension of this philosophy. It almost goes without saying, but I will say it anyway; money is tight this year. Public agencies and local boards of education all over the state are pinching pennies and scrambling for every dollar they can find. The delivery of a quality public education depends on it. The public is increasingly concerned about the perceived lack of transparency and accountability in public education spending. They point to the audit surrounding SERC as an example of reckless spending. This bill recognizes this sentiment and seeks to make RESC budgets more transparent.

The RESCs support local school boards when it comes to rolling out the Public Act 12-116, the education reform law of 2012. They help train teachers and administrators as districts prepare to implement the new evaluation system they help facilitate professional development as well as provide a host of other resources for districts. We are not trying to imply that money is not being spent wisely and fairly, we are simply asking for regular reporting of how it is spent.

By requiring the State Department of Education to report on the details of each RESCs annual budget, we can get a better understanding of where their funding comes from and how it is spent. How much of their funding comes from state and



local governments and how much comes from private sources? Do some RESCs provide more services than others? Which RESCs make the most of the grants they receive from the State Department of Education? How much support do local or regional boards of education provide to the RESCs? It is only when we can answer these questions that we can begin to determine how best to utilize the RESCs in our overall education objectives.

The education reform law requires districts and RESCs to adopt common charts of accounts on the expenditure side. SB 998 would take it one step further to provide genuine transparency for RESCs . I urge you to support this important bill.

### **HB 6504 An Act Concerning Alternative School Programs**

We agree with the need for alternative school programs, especially when they deal with students who otherwise find it difficult to succeed in traditional public high schools. However, it is difficult to fully support this bill without a better definition for "Alternative School Program". It leads us to question whether these programs are ones where students will sit in front of a computer all day and not have individualized attention from teachers and other school support staff. Online learning does not educate the "whole" child. It cannot help the child develop socially and emotionally. The children these alternative schools are targeting are in desperate need of social and emotional guidance. We need more information that this bill does not seem to provide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.