

Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee
March 17, 2014

Raised Bill No. 5559: An Act Concerning A Uniform School Calendar

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleishmann, and Members of the
Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Craig Edmondson, and I serve as the Executive Director of Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES), the regional educational service center for the twenty-five school districts in South Central Connecticut. I am also here as a representative of the RESC Alliance, a member of the M.O.R.E. Commission, and a member of the Regional School Calendar Task Force where I represent both ACES and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.

Today, I am submitting written testimony in support of Raised Bill No.5559, An Act Concerning A Uniform School Calendar. I appreciate the work of the General Assembly during these unprecedented times of fiscal and educational challenges and I thank you for the work you do.

This bill supports the adoption of the Regional School Calendar Task Force's recommendations to allow the Regional Educational Service Centers to continue their work in coordinating the development and implementation of a regional uniform calendar. Delaying the mandated year of implementation will allow districts time to modify binding contractual language and avoid unnecessary impact bargaining costs. In addition, it allows for appropriate communication to communities and districts regarding changes to some long-standing vacation practices and recognized holidays. I urge the Committee to support the delay in the mandated compliance and to consider all of the Task Force's recommendations. After careful consideration and at times spirited debate, Task Force representatives which included the members of the legislature, State Board

of Education, Connecticut Federation of Teachers, Connecticut Education Association, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, the Connecticut Federation of Catholic School Parents, a school principal, the president of the Connecticut Parent Teacher Association and the general manager from First Student Transportation all recognized the potential benefits of a common calendar and the potential opportunities it will create. These benefits include shared services, personnel, and professional development as well as coordinated transportation contracts, to name a few. In considering a common calendar however, we were deeply concerned about districts losing the flexibility that would allow them to recognize the time-honored customs and traditions in their respective communities. After significant discussion we agreed on a solution that would achieve the spirit of the mandate but still allow districts to adopt a calendar that could accommodate their unique needs.

The recommendation included the following:

Allow for individual districts flexibility of up to five (5) days within a regional calendar since:

- cultural and religious observances drive individual town calendars based on community need
- an individual school district may have unanticipated circumstances such as construction delays, serious maintenance issues, and student assessment windows

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the current raised bill and hope that you agree to the additional recommendations so we can achieve the potential outcomes that were originally identified by the M.O.R.E. Commission.

Thank you for your time, commitment and dedication to the public school students we serve.