



EDUCATION CONNECTION

A Regional Educational Service Center

355 Goshen Road
P.O. Box 909
Litchfield, CT 06759-0909
Phone: 860.567.0863
Fax: 860.567.3381

345 Main Street
Danbury, CT 06810
Phone: 203.791.1904
Fax: 203.778.8076

www.educationconnection.org

Testimony
Submitted to
The Education Committee
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Raised Bill No. 5559: An Act Concerning A Uniform School Calendar

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee

I am Danuta Thibodeau, Executive Director of EDUCATION CONNECTION, the regional educational service center, RESC, serving districts and their communities in northwest Connecticut.

I am submitting written testimony in support of Raised Bill 5559, An Act Concerning A Uniform Regional School Calendar. A Uniform Regional School Calendar Task Force was convened to develop guidelines for a uniform regional school calendar. The Task Force representatives included members of the legislature, State Board of Education, Connecticut Education Association, Connecticut Federation of Teachers, 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. In its work, the task force recognized the potential benefits and opportunities of a regional calendar. Based on presentations and analysis of data, the task force also identified issues that impact the implementation timeline. These include a number of local issues, such as current, multiple year contractual obligations and local district needs. Districts will need time to review these and other issues at the community and district level prior to the implementation of a regional calendar. This proposed bill will provide districts with the time needed to address these issues and allow for successful implementation of a regional calendar.

In implementing a regional calendar, we also recognize that the unique needs of districts should be taken into consideration. Based on feedback from stakeholder groups, the task force made a number of recommendations for the consideration of the Education Committee. These recommendations would provide the flexibility needed for districts to maintain long-standing local customs and traditions. Recommendations of the task force include allowing flexibility of up to five days within a regional calendar since:

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

I appreciate your consideration of Bill 5559 and your consideration of implementing all of the recommendations of the Task Force.

Thank you for your continued support of public school education.

Respectfully submitted,
Danuta Thibodeau, PhD
Executive Director, EDUCATION CONNECTION