



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Judiciary Committee  
Testimony of Commissioner Stefan Pryor  
February 24, 2014

SB 54: An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on SB 54, *An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel*.

As with last year's legislation concerning this issue, the Department of Education favors this proposed legislation. One of our objectives in the post-Sandy Hook period has been to support local efforts to enhance school safety and security while also advocating such efforts benefit from best practices and are undertaken thoughtfully. We aim to ensure that, when schools are justifiably fortified, we do not unintentionally create fortresses that no longer function in ways that are educationally sound. This legislative proposal aims to build upon the successes of similar programs in 13 districts across the state by requiring any district with a School Resource Officer to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with their local police department. This MOA will lay out the appropriate response for various student discipline issues within the school. In districts that have already put such a model in place, results have been reported including decreases in cases unnecessarily or inappropriately being referred to juvenile court, and progress being made in the disproportionate contact law enforcement personnel had with minority students.

Expanding this program statewide will require all districts to look carefully at how they handle discipline issues and develop an MOA, part of which will include a graduated response model. Many times school discipline issues can be handled within the school, rather than being referred to court. We are confident that the State has resources to assist districts in this work. The Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) has model policies and MOAs, districts currently doing this work can serve as resources, some federal funds are available to support districts, and the Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) is currently preparing school response tool kits for districts.

The inclusion of information concerning school-based arrests in strategic school profiles will also provide important data to allow us to track progress of school-based arrests, and continue to address this important issue. The Department is supportive of providing aggregate school-based arrest data in the Strategic School Profile. Disaggregating the data for all schools and districts will result in a vast majority of the data being suppressed due to data confidentiality requirements. The Department understands the need for these data to be disaggregated to inform policy and focus intervention strategies, and will be able to do so through our Public School Information System as the legislation proposes.

We look forward to the ongoing and expanded partnership this proposal creates between our Department, the Judicial Branch, and the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection.