



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
submitted to the
Education Committee
March 19, 2015**

**HB 7016 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MORE COMMISSION SPECIAL
EDUCATION SELECT WORKING GROUP**

**SB 1099 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION TO DEVELOP A VISION
AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CONNECTICUT EDUCATION SYSTEM**

HB 7019 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT

**SB 1098 AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SHORTAGE AREAS,
INTERSTATE AGREEMENTS FOR TEACHER CERTIFICATION RECIPROCITY, MINORITY TEACHER
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY INSTRUCTION**

HB 7018 AN ACT CONCERNING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

SB 1096 AN ACT CONCERNING CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education appreciates the opportunity to continue to participate in the work of the MORE Commission Special Education Select Working Group, and are supportive of the proposals contained in HB 7016, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the MORE Commission Special Education Select Working Group. We would like to point out that there should be adequate resources, whether through funding or human capital, to ensure the successful completion of the various initiatives contained in this bill. We also encourage you, as recommended in the working group report, to examine ways to achieve resolution of disputes in a more expeditious manner.

CABE does have concerns that as drafted Section 13, with respect to the right of parents to have school paraprofessionals present in all portions of the PPT, may impose an unreasonable burden and disrupt the education of other students, particularly in those cases where a paraprofessional works with multiple students.

CABE supports the development of a comprehensive vision for Connecticut's public education system. It is particularly important that the development of a strategic master plan include both a review of various mandates as well as funding policies, as outlined in SB 1099, An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Commission to Develop a Vision and Strategic Plan for the Connecticut Education System. We do urge you to include a school board member as a voting member of the Commission.

CABE opposes HB 7019, An Act Concerning the Minimum Budget Requirement. This bill would significantly weaken the minimum budget requirement. Existing language in Section 10-262i(d) of the General Statutes already gives the Commissioner of Education the opportunity to approve additional reductions in the MBR when a district realizes savings through intradistrict efficiencies or regional collaboration. CABE members have adopted a position specifically urging the legislature to provide discretion to the Commissioner of Education to adjust the MBR in situations where a local of regional board of education seeks relief due to significant enrollment changes. It is imperative that this request come from a board of education, which is charged with meeting the educational needs of the state. Providing for a reduction of the MBR in cases of declining enrollment of 50% of the net current expenditures per pupil will leave many boards of education unable to meet the ongoing costs of salaries, health benefits and transportation.

CABE supports the provisions of SB 1098, An Act Concerning Teacher Certification Requirements, which provides for reciprocity agreements. In a relatively small state like Connecticut with multiple educator shortage areas, certification reciprocity is particularly important.

CABE is concerned that as drafted HB 7018, An Act Concerning Alternative Education, may prevent the implementation of successful alternative programs, which by their nature need to be flexible to meet the needs of the students. In

particular, imposing the length of school day provisions of CGS Section 10-16 would preclude programs with intensive instruction offered in a more individualized manner over a shorter period of time.

With respect to SB 1096, An Act Concerning Charter Schools, it is imperative that in an era of significant fiscal constrains at the state, federal and local levels, the General Assembly first meet its commitments to funding existing education grants, particularly the Education Cost Sharing grant and the Special Education Cost grant. These should remain as a funding priority before new initiatives or programs are funded.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.