



**TESTIMONY of the CT ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS  
Before the Education Committee**

**IN SUPPORT OF: SB 1059**

**An Act Concerning High School Graduation Requirements**

The CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) supports legislation that would postpone the implementation of the new high school graduation requirements for two years for the following reasons.

In 2010, state statute put into place a series of high school graduation requirements and a schedule for implementing them. That statute was the culmination of a number of efforts by the then Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education and the leaders of the Legislature. The latter effort took the form of a group that was convened by the then Co-Chairs of the Legislature's Education Committee and on which CAPSS was represented along with CABE, CAS, the CT Federation of School Administrators (CSFA), AFT CT, the CEA, ConnCAN and the Commissioner of Education.

Since the graduation requirements required funds to be implemented, it was agreed to by this group that their implementation would be postponed until funds were available either from the federal government and/or the state government for such implementation. To date, no such funds have been available and there is little probability that any will be available in the near future.

Despite this, CT is on a schedule whereby the graduation requirements must be in place to affect the graduating class of 2020, the class that enters high school in September of 2016. School districts, therefore, will be in the uncomfortable position of having to allocate funds for the graduation requirements without the needed assistance from the federal and state levels. This by itself is sufficient reason for the continued postponement of what is now a major unfunded mandate.

Over the past four years, however, there have developed three even stronger reasons for not only postponing the graduation requirements but also reconsidering them.

1. There has been realization by more and more members of the public education community that unless public education is transformed into a personalized learning platform, the expectation that every child will learn what he or she needs to know and be able to do to go on to lead decent and productive lives will not be met. That realization has sparked efforts in more and

more school districts to move from seat based graduation requirements to ones that require students to demonstrate mastery of specific content and skills before being granted a high school diploma. The new graduation requirements were developed before this realization and these actions took place. It is time, then, to re-examine the requirements with a view to aligning them with a move to personalized learning at the secondary level.

2. There has also been a growing concern that the graduation requirements will impede the effort to make sure that all students meet the higher standards set by the CT Core Standards for Language Arts and Mathematics and the CT Social Studies Standards as well as higher standards across the curriculum. The higher standards require deeper learning with more critical thinking. This does not mesh well with a inch deep but mile wide curriculum. Also, the courses squeezed out of the program of studies by the higher credit requirements are often the doorway to reach students to master the core standards.
3. Research does not support the assertion that more credits equal more skill and knowledge. In a study by Buddin and Croft for the ACT, the authors conclude “that state policies that simply raise math and science graduation requirement may not be effective alone for improving student outcomes.” Raising student performance requires a different system than simply raising the number of credits.

The proposed changes to the graduation requirement are based on the premise that more credits will equal a better education. Yet, we know that what matters is not the number of credits a student collects that will determine his/her success in college, career, and life beyond. Rather it is the knowledge, skills, and understanding that students master over the course of their high school career that is essential to developing a productive, equitable, and truly democratic society. When schools place the responsibility for their own learning on the students and when schools provide rigorous, challenging and personalized learning experiences for students that are based on the unshakable belief that all students can master the CT Common Core as well as content area standards, we will truly have transformed education in CT.

**CAPSS, therefore, proposes that implementation of the new graduation requirements be postponed so that they will affect the graduating class of 2022 and that the Legislature direct the CT State Department of Education to review and revise in consultation with superintendents, central office administrators, building administrators and teachers the graduation requirements so that they align well with a student-centered approach that will enable students to meet higher achievement standards across a wide range of subject areas.**