



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
submitted to the
Education Committee
February 24, 2016**

**SB 176 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SMART START PROGRAM
SB 174 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
HB 5305 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL PARAPROFRSSIONAL TRAINING
SB 175 AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
HB 5308 AN ACT CONCERNING A GENERAL EDUCATION MULTITIERED SYSTEM**

Chairman Fleischmann and Chairman Slossberg and members of the Education Committee, my name is Donald Harris, the Chair of the Bloomfield Board of Education and Vice President of the Government Relations Committee at CABE.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education supports a districts practice to start pre-k and kindergarten students on an eased in approach, unlike the mandate in SB 176, An Act Concerning the Smart Start Program. Some district start with half days, learning how to ride the big yellow school bus and leaving their parents side without a tear. It's a big day! Sometimes being able to focus on all the new students no matter the grade works best. If this coincides with the first day of school for the rest of the district that's great but this really has to be what's best for the student.

CABE strongly supports SB 174, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Professional Development and In-Service Training Requirements for Educators. School districts throughout the state are finding that the cumulative impact of state mandated professional development is eliminating their ability to focus on areas were their staff members have the greatest needs. Over the years, numerous specific professional development requirements have been added to the statutes. Some districts have calculated that there are 40 hours annually devoted to mandated state professional development. Many of these statutory requirements require training for all staff on an annual basis. The creation of a task force will provide an opportunity to examine these requirements, consider consolidation, as well as whether some requirements may be outdated or could be delivered on a less frequent basis. We urge you to support SB 174.

CABE is concerned that HB 5305, An Act Concerning School Paraprofessional Training, while well intended, is too prescriptive. It requires that training be provided prior to the start of the school year by the immediate supervisor. This may be logistically impossible, as some existing contracts for paraprofessionals provide that their work year does not begin until the first day of school. While it is important that paraprofessionals have training relative to their duties, as well as the specific needs of the students to whom they are assigned, this may be better delivered on an ongoing basis rather than at a prescribed point in time.

CABE is concerned that section 7 of SB 175, An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Department of Education, which limits to 3%, the alliance district funds that can be carried forward to the next fiscal year, may prevent boards from using these resources for valuable programs such as summer school. We urge you to allow boards of education to continue to use funds for the purposes outlined in their approved application for funding.

CABE believes that HB 5308, An Act Concerning a General Education Multitiered System of Instruction and Supports, addresses a number of important issues related to the Common Core State Standards and positive school climate. While it would be valuable for the Department to undertake a review of the framework for response to intervention, any specific changes to the requirements on local and regional boards of education should await the completion of that review. Therefore, we urge you to reject section 2 of the bill pending the recommendations from the Department of Education. In its current form, section 2 is overly prescriptive and will create additional reporting requirements for local districts. In addition, it does not appear that section 3 is necessary, as there are already Connecticut regulations with respect to providing services to children with disabilities.

Thank you for your continued support of public education.