

Testimony of John Bestor
Education Committee Public Hearing
March 7, 2016
Regarding: HB 5551 "AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK OF SCHOOLS".

I am writing in opposition to HB 5551

It is extremely dangerous authorizing the State Department of Education to take over control of schools in low-performing districts and denying the citizens of that community the ability to have an authoritative voice into determining a course of corrective action that is necessary for school improvement. Wherever such actions have taken place in the past across our Nation there has been disenfranchisement of community leaders and no significant improvement in the status of educational results. School districts and municipalities that have been taken over, like the city schools in Detroit and the city of Flint, have ended up far worse off after the takeover.

Continued efforts by privatizing "education reform" agents are persistent in seeking to increase the presence of charter schools which have - to date - not demonstrated any large-scale effective or quantifiable improvement in academic results, despite hand-selecting who attends, kicking out students who are not a good fit, and discriminating against students with disabilities or second-language backgrounds. And, at the same time, these programs take valued resources from traditional neighborhood schools with no appropriate public oversight and regulation on how they have spent the taxpayer monies. The opportunities for graft and corruption are rampant and, unfortunately human nature being what it is, continues to be investigated both in our State and throughout the country.

Rather than giving more power and money in the Commissioner's Network of low performing schools, it would be better to meet our fiduciary responsibilities to public schools by fully funding the ECE formula. Until our education leaders begin to properly address and fund the problems facing traditional neighborhood public schools, it should not be allowed to funnel more resources to the "for profit" charter school industry.

Once again, I ask that you NOT SUPPORT HB 5551 and prevent the CSDE from wasting more precious tax dollars on unregulated and poorly monitored charter school programs.

Respectfully submitted,

John Bestor
24 Walnut Tree Hill Road
Sandy Hook, CT