



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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Testimony  
submitted to  
the Education Committee  
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**HB 5552 AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION**  
**SB 380 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXCLUSION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE RESULTS ON**  
**THE MASTERY EXAMINATION FROM TEACHER EVALUATIONS**  
**HB 5551 AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK OF SCHOOLS**  
**SB 381 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY SCHOOL CLIMATE**  
**HB 5554 AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL EDUCATION**  
**379 SB AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MINORITY TEACHER**  
**RECRUITMENT TASK FORCE**  
**HB 5556 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGIONAL UNIFORM SCHOOL CALENDAR**  
**SB 378 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL**  
**GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS TASK FORCE**

CABE strongly supports HB 5552, An Act Concerning Special Education. This bill would create the opportunity for school districts and parents who have been unable to agree upon the appropriate program for a special education student to utilize the services of an impartial third party adjudicator, mutually agreeable to the parties. The adjudicator would issue findings of facts and make a formal recommendation concerning the appropriate identification, evaluation or educational placement for the child. This recommendation would not be binding on the parties, and would preserve the right of either party to proceed to a formal due process hearing.

As in other dispute resolution processes, this would provide an opportunity for an impartial expert to assess the information regarding the educational needs of the child, and provide their expert opinion to both parties. Any process that can help avoid the lengthy, costly and disruptive formal due process hearing is worthy of support. We know from experience that due process hearings can extend over the course of many months, result in educational professionals being taking away from the students they serve when they are needed as expert witnesses, and cause a serious breach in the relationship between the family and the school district. We strongly urge you to support HB 5552.

CABE strongly opposes SB 380, An Act Concerning the Exclusion of Student Performance Results on the Mastery Examination from Teacher Evaluations. This bill would prevent any use of student performance data on statewide mastery examinations as part of an educator's evaluation. CABE's opposition to this bill is based on several facts:

- The Legislature created the Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee to address the development, implementation, and modifications to the guidelines for a model teacher evaluation and support program. PEAC meets on a regular basis and is in the process of identifying areas that may be in need of modification.

- Student growth as reflected on standardized tests is an important component of educator evaluation, and in fact was agreed to by all the participants in PEAC, which included representatives of teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards.
- PEAC is in the process of gathering data on the current implementation of the evaluation system. Any modifications should be made based on such data.
- New initiatives such as the educator evaluation and support program need to be examined to determine their effectiveness and the need for any modifications. This should be done in a thoughtful, deliberative manner, and PEAC serves as the best vehicle to accomplish that goal.
- Standardized test results have not yet been used in the evaluation process, thus this legislation is premature.

We strongly urge you to reject SB 380.

CABE opposes the provisions of HB 5551, An Act Concerning the Commissioner's Network of Schools, which would remove the authority of the locally elected board of education and place responsibility for implementing the educational interests of the state with the Commissioner of Education. The current model for Commissioner's Network Schools, in which local boards of education work in concert with the Department of Education, has proven to be effective as seen by the experiences in Bloomfield and Waterbury, which have recently been featured as models of success.

CABE supports SB 381, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study School Climate. We recognize that school climate is critically important to student success. The opportunity to review, streamline and align the numerous state policies related to school climate, bullying, school safety, and social-emotional learning will ensure that we are meeting student needs in the most effective manner.

CABE supports the provisions in HB 5554, An Act Concerning Regional Education, which proposes to foster voluntary efforts to share services through regional educational service centers or between two or more boards of education. Districts continue to look for ways to deliver services in a more efficient and cost effective manner, particularly those services that are considered "back office", and this bill will help to remove some existing barriers to those efforts.

CABE supports SB 379, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force. The bill extends the existence of this task force until June 30, 2017, and requires examination of the impact of the Praxis exam on minority teacher requirement. The bill also creates a minority teacher policy oversight council within the Department of Education. This council will serve as a vehicle to address issues related to the recruitment and retention of minority educational professionals. This is an area of significant interest and concern to CABE, which recently formed an ad hoc committee on diversity examining some of these same issues. CABE has had a longstanding position supporting the recruitment of qualified individuals who reflect this state's diversity to the education profession. We urge you to support SB 379.

HB 5556, An Act Concerning the Regional Uniform School Calendar, this bill would help address concerns expressed by some districts relative to the implementation of the uniform regional school calendars" specifically putting in statute the task force adopted guidelines. We oppose the 10% penalty on transportation funds as they have been capped for years and districts struggle to provide this state right for students.

CABE strongly supports SB 378, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force. This task force, which includes representation from superintendents, principals, school boards, and the State Department of Education, examined the existing school graduation requirements in light of what we now know about a meaningful educational experience for high school students. It became clear that as school districts move to a more personalized and mastery based learning experience it is imperative that the state statutory provisions for high school graduation provide more flexibility, not more rigidity. In addition, as we move toward a goal of less testing in the school experience, it is appropriate to eliminate the requirement for the state developed end of school year examinations currently provided in statute.

CABE strongly urge you to support SB 378.