Testimony
submitted to the
Education Committee
March 8, 2018

SB 364 AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING.

SB 359 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DISAGGREGATION OF STUDENT DATA BY ETHNIC SUBGROUPS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION SYSTEM.

SB 362 AN ACT CONCERNING REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION IN READING.

SB 361 AN ACT CONCERNING INTERDISTRICT COOPERATION AND THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS OF COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS.

HB 5340 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education supports SB 364, An Act Concerning Special Education Funding. School districts would benefit in lowering the excess cost threshold from 4½ to 2 times the average per pupil expenditure costs. As this is implemented, districts apply for reimbursement after the district has accounted for the district cost of 4½ times the district’s average per pupil expenditure costs.

Board of Education members report that their district budgets are comprised of 20-30% special education expenses. Current audited data has 13.4% of CT students identified as special education. As this is a reimbursement grant, districts must rely on SDE’s determination of the percentage of reimbursement back to each district.

However, since this grant has been capped for many years, the highest priority would be to remove the cap from the grant, providing school districts with a degree of certainty as to their state reimbursement.

In a January 29, 2018 memo to Superintendents from SDE, the SDE estimated that Special Education Excess Cost grant would only be reimbursed at 73% in May.

CABE is concerned that SB 359, An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System would create an absolute prohibition on the use of disaggregated data. It is unclear to us what the exception for data that is “collective uniformly across the entire population of students” would mean. Clearly being able to look at student performance in particular subgroups allows us to appropriately target resources to areas of greatest needs, and we urge you to allow school districts to continue to have that flexibility.

CABE supports the intent of SB 362, An Act Concerning Remedial Instruction in Reading to expand the implementation of, but we are concerned that remedial reading programs, SDE and local districts lack the resources for expansion at this time.
CABE supports SB 361, An Act Concerning Interdistrict Cooperation and the Reporting Requirements of Cooperative Arrangements. It is imperative that we remove any obstacles, real or perceived, to school districts working cooperatively to deliver educational programs. Expressly authorizing the regional educational service centers to enter into agreements with school districts for administrative services, as well as permitting the reporting of the expenditure data of a cooperative arrangement by the school district, can facilitate this effort.

We also urge you to consider allowing school districts to purchase goods through the regional educational service centers without being limited to The Department of Administrative Services contracts or local bidding requirements. Current law prohibits the use of RESC and COG cooperative purchasing programs when state funds are involved. Barriers such as these reduce the opportunity for cost efficiencies.

CABE opposes HB 5340, An Act Concerning a Study of Education Savings Accounts, and any plan that would reduce the revenue available to fund public schools. At a time when less funding is available and districts must deal with holdbacks occurring DURING the academic year, Connecticut should not create a program to diminish public education, and require the Department of Education to expend resources on a study.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.