

Public Safety and Security Committee

Connecticut RESC Alliance **Testimony on HB 5220**

February 27, 2018

To the members of the CT General Assembly's *Public Safety and Security Committee*,

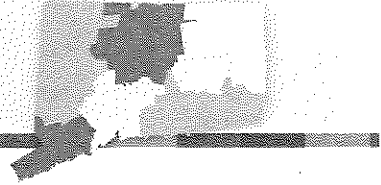
Connecticut's six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESC) are not-for-profit, fee-for-service public education agencies. Established by the Connecticut legislature more than 50 years ago, RESCs are school-based partnerships governed by local school districts that provide high-quality, cost-effective education services to schools, districts, and communities. Each of our agencies has successfully and effectively assisted school districts in our regions with fingerprinting candidates, employees and volunteers for many years.

While we support legislative efforts to increase student safety and school security, a string of recent policy and procedural decisions by DESPP related to the processing of fingerprints have had a negative impact on school districts financially, caused delays in the hiring of personnel and created a bureaucratic backlog that has slowed the system significantly. The current system is untenable. It is too expensive and creates a tremendous administrative burden. The backlog of requests will only continue to pile up, degrading the security improvements targeted by the original legislation for background checks. The recent DESPP changes have undone a regional process and system of fingerprinting that had been for many years. These changes have created inefficiencies and increased the challenges of securing substitute teachers, supporting preservice teachers and interns, encouraging volunteers, and increased the barriers to entry-level jobs in education.

If HB-5220 intends to allow DESPP to engage a private third-party vendor, outside of the RESCs, to take over the process of obtaining fingerprints and managing the lists of background check results, we would be very much opposed to that change. RESCs have a long-standing history of conducting fingerprinting services successfully, and our school districts trust our ability to support them in this process. RESCs have already invested in the equipment to perform this service and will be more efficient and cost-

RESC Alliance

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effective if given an opportunity to work with DESPP on policies and procedures that work for all stakeholders.

We ask that you consider a return to the centralized regional system, which RESCs have been allowed to maintain in the past, that permits an individual's background check to be used in multiple school districts. Require DESPP to work cooperatively with the CT RESC Alliance on a solution that will reduce the financial burden on the candidates, school districts and municipalities, and most importantly, ensures an efficient and effective process for fingerprinting and background checks that will make our schools more secure.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director



Dr. Greg J. Florio
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Dr. Jeffrey C. Kitching
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