



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
submitted to the
Education Committee
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SB 454 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL SECURITY.

**HB 5445 AN ACT CONCERNING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR
EXPELLED STUDENTS.**

**SB 452 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE
EDUCATION AND AWARENESS IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM.**

**HB 5447 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AUDITORS OF PUBLIC
ACCOUNTS CONCERNING PRIVATE PROVIDERS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION.**

SB 455 AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

**HB 5451 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION CENTERS.**

HB 5444 AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE STUDENT DATA PRIVACY ACT.

**SB 459 AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL PROCESSING AND RETENTION OF FINGERPRINT
RECORDS.**

**HB 5452 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON LIFE-
THREATENING FOOD ALLERGIES IN SCHOOLS.**

SB 453 AN ACT CONCERNING CLASSROOM SAFETY AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR.

CABE supports SB 454, An Act Concerning School Security, the continuation of the school security grant, it serves districts in new installations and also in updating infrastructure to best secure school buildings.

CABE strongly supports section 1 of HB 5445, An Act Concerning Alternative Educational Opportunities for Expelled Students, which would focus on guidance related to the quality the opportunities provided to students in alternative education programs, rather than a specific number of hours. As we move away from “seat time” for all of our students, it is particularly important to recognize that in the alternative educational setting, where instruction is most likely delivered on an individualized or small group basis, the number of hours of instruction is much less relevant than the quality of the opportunity provided to the student. The standards adopted by the State Board of Education require appropriate programming and the development of an individualized learning

plan for students in the program. This individualized learning plan informs and directs student learning goals and activities for the duration of the expulsion.

SB 452 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Holocaust and Genocide Education and Awareness in the Social Studies Curriculum. While recognizing the importance of this issue, CAFE urges you to refrain from the addition of a specific item to the existing curriculum mandates. Resource materials are available from the State Department of Education to enable districts to incorporate this topic into the curriculum, and a specific mandate is unnecessary.

CAFE strongly supports the provisions in section 1 of SB 455, An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention, which focus on the need to identify successful practices to enhance minority teacher recruitment, utilizing innovative methods to attract minority candidates to the teaching profession, modernize the certification process to eliminate obstacles to certification, and utilize high quality, affordable and bias free the educator assessments. CAFE's own Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity has been working for several years in an effort to address the need for additional minority candidates for teaching and administrative positions, and welcomes advice and support from the State Department of Education to develop innovative strategies to attract and retain minority teachers.

However, we must acknowledge that given the severe staffing shortage at the State Department of Education, it may be extremely difficult, despite their best efforts, for the Department to fulfill this requirement effectively.

CAFE is concerned that the provisions in section 3 of SB 455 would allow an individual employed at a charter school for 3 years to obtain a provisional educator certificate by simply demonstrating "a commitment to continued education and professional development" and "evidence of effectiveness". Given the level of requirements for Connecticut certification for all other educators, this does not seem to come close to the same robust requirement.

CAFE supports additional funds for HB 5451, An Act Concerning Funding for Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Centers for programs that have traditionally been under resourced, including the Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Centers, the technical high schools and magnet schools. We do believe that it is imperative to develop a comprehensive educational funding system that provides the resources need by our students regardless the type of public school they attend.

CAFE has concerns that HB 5444, An Act Concerning Revisions to the Student Data Privacy Act, vendors will agree to an addendum to a contract, while it may serve as a solution to many of the vendors not currently complying with Connecticut's state privacy laws, we remain concerned that vendors will not even find this an opportunity to provide business in Connecticut. . We would also request the guidance from the state Department of Education and the Commission for Educational Technology be provide to districts before the districts would need to actually implement. We request a postponement of the effective date of July 2019.

CAFE is concerned that the language in section 1 of HB 5447, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Auditors of Public Accounts Concerning Private Providers of Special Education, would establish a new requirement beginning July 1, 2019 that boards of education would not receive reimbursement for special education services paid to private providers unless they have entered into a written contract. Current law requires an "agreement" with the private provider. The individualized education program for students provides great specificity as to the type and frequency of services to be provided. Since Black's Law Dictionary defines contract as "a covenant or agreement between two or more persons with a lawful consideration cause". When a board of education makes an agreement with a private provider that the private provider will fulfill the provisions of the individualized education program and the board of education will pay a specified sum of money, this is in fact a legally binding contract. The additional language proposed in this bill is likely to create confusion rather than provide clarity.

CABE strongly supports provisions of SB 459, An Act Concerning Regional Processing and Retention of Fingerprint Records, which would explicitly allow regional educational service centers to arrange for or conduct fingerprinting and criminal history record checks and to retain those records to assist districts in the hiring of prospective employees. For substitute teachers and student teachers in particular, who will often be serving in multiple districts, it is efficient and cost effective to allow the regional educational service centers to retain the state and national criminal history records and provide the results to a board of education.

CABE urges you to address a number of practical issues that arose with the combined passage of Public Acts 16-67 and 17-68 which are summarized here:

- **DMV overlap:** Prior to 2016, CGS10- 221d contained a provision that if an employee was required to undergo fingerprinting for DMV purposes to obtain a license endorsement, the employee was exempt from having to meet the same requirement under CGS10- 221d (which makes sense as it is duplicative). This often comes into play with schools that hire their own bus drivers; and for private schools where most of faculty require endorsements to drive school vehicles. This provision was dropped in one of the public acts. Now, new employees are subject to fingerprinting for both purposes; and there is a \$75 additional fee at the DMV.
- **Students:** The law exempts students employed by the school who attend that school from having to undergo background checks. the current exemption applies only to students employed by same school where they go to school; so many schools are still having to do fingerprint based checks if they employ a student from another school (as a camp counselor etc), and we have received questions as to whether this exemption had been intended to apply to any student currently attending any k-12 school, and if not, if this would be considered.
- **Substitute teachers:** The law requires substitute teachers to undergo checks; however, if such substitutes are employed by contractors and are not direct employees of the school, it appears that DESPP is taking position that the contractor is not authorized to receive CJI and do such fingerprint based background checks. This needs clarification.
- **Short term/repeat hires:** the law carves out only one exception for substitute teachers as a unique position of employment within schools. However, schools often hire other short term employees and may have them return in subsequent years (e.g. soccer coach who works outside of the school, but coaches every fall). It remains unclear if such positions are considered new hires every year and thus, subject to checks annually or if there is exception if they undergo at least once upon initial hire. Likewise, not clear if such position was initially hired before July 1, 2016 (Or 2017), whether the person is considered a new hire now.
- **"upon hire"** - helpful to have clarification to confirm what is considered date of hire. Is it date contact entered into; or date when contract term begins. This would also assist with the short term /repeat hires discussed above.

CABE supports sections of HB 5452, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Task Force on Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Schools, which provide for the review of allergen restrictions and safety protocols for curriculum and school programs. We support including them in wellness and school climate programs adopted by the board.

We have concerns about sections of the bill that while permissive, would put further requirements on school bus drivers whose chief job is safely operating a school bus. Comprehensive safety procedures that drivers should

follow in case of any emergency are important. The list of students with food allergies would need to be securely handled so as not to cause disclosure of a student's health condition.

CABE is concerned that the language in SB 453, An Act Concerning Classroom Safety and Disruptive Behavior, related to "daily classroom safety" is over broad and will be impossible to implement at the local or state level. The bill as drafted would require boards of education to insure "daily classroom safety", a requirement that is impossible to guarantee. The provisions that would require notification to the parents of a child that was "exposed" to an action is an unreasonable burden and does not differentiate based on the nature of the conduct. Section 2 of the bill would also require the establishment of a school safety committee, which is currently permissive. Many districts have utilized their school climate committees to address these issues as part of a comprehensive approach to providing a safe school environment.

CABE also strongly opposes section 9, which would require that boards of education maintain a school social worker to student ratio of 1 to 250 students. Boards of education in this era of severely constrained resources must prioritize many competing demands – class size, advanced placement classes, social emotional needs, and need the flexibility to meet these needs in the most appropriate manner. School social workers, counselors, and mental health professionals all play a valuable role and it is at the local level that these staffing decisions are best made.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.