

**Connecticut General Assembly:
Education Committee Hearing
March 14, 2018**

***Connecticut RESC Alliance*
Testimony on SB 459
(and HB 5220)**

To the Members of the CT General Assembly's *Education Committee*,

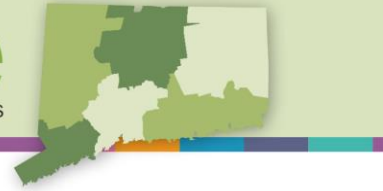
Connecticut's six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) are not-for-profit, fee-for-service public education agencies. Established by the Connecticut legislature more than 50 years ago, RESCs are school-based partnerships governed by local school districts that provide high-quality, cost-effective 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 the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (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 for the candidates who are required to be fingerprinted 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 successfully implemented and run smoothly 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. 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 and/or staff to perform this service and will be more efficient and cost-effective if given an opportunity.

We support SB 459 and the proposed return to the centralized regional system, which RESCs have been allowed to maintain in the past and permits an individual's background check to be used in multiple school districts.

RESC Alliance

CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE OF REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTERS



We would also look forward to an opportunity to communicate and collaborate with DESPP to develop policies and procedures that both meet the requirements of their system and work for school districts. However, we are concerned that the intent of HB-5220, which had a hearing before the Public Safety Committee, is to allow DESPP to engage a private third-party vendor, outside of the RESCs, that would eventually take over the process of obtaining fingerprints and managing the lists of background check results for school districts. We would be opposed to that change.

We would instead ask for legislation that would 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



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