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- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- Association for Middle Level Education
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- New England League of Middle Schools
- National Federation of State High School Associations

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THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

SB 452, 453, 454, 455, 459
HB 5444, 5445

KARISSA L. NIEHOFF, ED.D
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MARCH 14, 2018

I am Dr. Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Schools. We represent school leaders in approximately 900 member schools- public, Vo-ag, CTECS, parochial, charter and magnet. Our member schools serve students in grades PK-12; from rural, suburban and urban settings. Testimony from CAS reflects the voice and experience of building leaders; those responsible for implementation of policy at the ground level, management of the day-to-day operations of schools, and provision of a safe, healthy learning environment for students and adults alike. We offer testimony on the following bills:

SB 452- AA CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION AND AWARENESS IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

While we appreciate the intent of the bill to ensure that important events in history are infused into school curricula, we remind the Legislature that each year curricular requirements have been increased. Particular topics are continuously added as statutory requirements yet the school day and school year remain finite. CAS respectfully requests that the Legislature work with the CSDE, school and district leaders and content experts prior to enacting additional curricular requirements for schools.

SB 453- AN ACT CONCERNING CLASSROOM SAFETY AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR.

CAS supports the intent of the bill to include provisions relating to daily classroom safety in safe school climate plans, establish a student to school social worker ratio, and to require notification of incidents of violations of daily classroom safety. We especially appreciate the emphasis on access to school social workers. School social workers are trained mental health professionals who can assist with mental health concerns, behavioral concerns, positive behavioral support, academic and classroom support, consultation with teachers, parents and administrators as well as provide individual and group counseling/therapy. They provide integral and necessary services to educators, community members, students, and parents and families to create the best programs, plans, and partnerships to help all children be successful in and out of school.

Serving schools
and their leaders



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SB 454- AA CONCERNING SCHOOL SECURITY

CAS supports this bill. We To require school districts to submit reports on fire drills and crisis response drills to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and the Department of Education, to extend the school security infrastructure competitive grant program for an additional year, and to include notification of emergencies to schools and child care facilities in local emergency plans of operations.

SB 455- AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

CAS supports this bill. In Connecticut, where nearly half of the student population is minority yet less than nine percent of educators are minority, the recruitment and retention of minority teachers is of critical importance. Current certification requirements have been a significant barrier to minority educators from outside of Connecticut, those with alternative teaching experiences, and those who have not passed Connecticut certification examinations. This bill addresses these barriers and will allow for more flexibility in certification for minority educators deemed qualified and capable to educate our students. CAS appreciates that membership of the minority teacher recruitment and retention task force be revised to include relevant minority representation. As the organization that works closely with leaders in ~900 Connecticut schools, CAS would very much like to hold a seat on this task force.

SB 459- AA CONCERNING THE REGIONAL PROCESSING AND RETENTION OF FINGERPRINT RECORDS.

CAS supports this bill authorizing regional educational service centers to arrange for or conduct fingerprinting and criminal history records checks and to retain those records. This bill will allow for more expedient processing of necessary background information and will assist schools in assisting school districts in the hiring process of prospective employees.

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HB 5444- AA CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE STUDENT DATA PRIVACY ACT.

CAS supports this bill. School districts are immersed in negotiations with vendors over student data privacy. One district technology director calculated that PowerSchool (the most common data platform in schools) has over 160 individually negotiated contracts with exactly the same language. If a district has 30 (low estimate) apps and software packages that use student data, this suggests that there are nearly 5,000 individual contracts that need to be negotiated across the state. If the CSDE can play a role in negotiating contracts for major vendors and have a coalition that informs negotiating processes, countless hours of duplicative effort will be saved in school districts, and a more efficient process can be in place to ensure that student data is protected.

We greatly appreciate that the executive director of the Connecticut Association of Schools will be added to the membership of the student data privacy task force.

HB 5445- AA CONCERNING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPELLED STUDENTS.

CAS supports this bill and the newly adopted standards for the provision of an adequate alternative educational opportunity for expelled students. The new standards emphasize quality of the alternative learning experience without requiring the number of hours equivalent to 180 school days. This is critical as the needs of expelled students can be drastically different, involving academic and multiple other support services. In addition, most alternative experiences occur in a very small setting with a low teacher-student ratio. The removal of required hours allows for a more personalized plan to support expelled students and hopefully guide them towards success.

