

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-360

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY BEST PRACTICES

Title: REGARDING RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION.

Vote Date: 3/14/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/8/2018

File No.: 140

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

SB 360 establishes a task force to examine best practices related to the response to intervention approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. It must report its findings and recommendations to the Education Committee no later than January 1, 2019.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner, State of Connecticut Department of Education:](#)

Commissioner Wentzell wrote that the Department believes it would be beneficial to review and update best practices, strategies and structures for Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBI) across the state. They did caution however that the January 1, 2019 reporting date may be too ambitious or aggressive. They stated that Universal Screening, Tiered Interventions, and Data Driven Decision Making are necessary components for early intervention for all students both academically and behaviorally, this process would assist with the much needed update to the 2008 CT Framework for SRBI document. In addition, the Department would be happy to serve on this taskforce.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Schools \(CAS\):](#)

Niehoff testified on behalf of CAS in support of SB 360. She expressed that the creation of a task force to study best practices is in response to intervention (RTI), and requested that CAS

be included as a member of this task force because as the current language only includes district leaders and teachers, but not administrators. She went on to say that CAS can bring the perspective of principals and assistant principals who often oversee and implement RTI strategies.

Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS):

Rabinowitz testified on behalf of CAPSS in support of SB 360 and the formation of the Task Force for three reasons: First, to address why children enter schools who have not received needed intervention services or who's learning or behavioral issues have not been identified. Second, to identify best practices for early intervention, including the funding structure for services, the impact of fees on family participation, the expansion of the eligibility criteria for "at risk" children, the determining criteria for children eligible for pre-K special education services, and transition policies for children enrolled in birth to three programs, among other issues. The final reason, Rabinowitz wrote, is that the identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs early in their school career will prevent more expensive and disruptive interventions later.

Virginia DeLong, Chairman of the Board of Directors, CT School Counselor Association:

DeLong wrote that the CT School Counselor Association supports SB 360 and appreciates being included as a member of the Response to Intervention Task Force. She stated that school counselors have a deep understanding of the academic and behavioral needs of students at all levels of RTI and are therefore fully supportive of this process, and expressed support for the early identification of students in need of more intensive interventions, in order to improve learning outcomes and preempt the students falling behind. She then described the different levels of her Association's Comprehensive School Counseling program, saying that they provide a universal and developmentally appropriate counseling curriculum to all students, data driven behavioral interventions through small groups, and more intensive individual counseling. DeLong wrote that by providing these intervention services, attendance, academic, and behavioral outcomes can improve for all students, and collaborating with their colleagues on best practices is vital to this process.

Judy Goldberg, Vice President of Government Relations, Connecticut Parent Teacher Association (PTA):

Goldberg wrote on behalf of the PTA in support of SB 360, and also requested an appointment in Section 1(b)(8) ("of a representative designated by a Special Education Parent-Teacher Association in the state"). She stated that the PTA has a Constitution Statewide Special Education Parent -Teacher Association (SEPTA) and local SEPTAs in districts throughout Connecticut that support the welfare of children with special needs and promote an understanding of special education.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Susan Kelley, Director, Alliance for Children s Mental Health \(ACMH\):](#)

Kelley wrote on behalf of the ACMH, that while they generally agree that creation of a task force is sometimes necessary, they do not support SB 360. They criticized the bill for not including parents as members of the task force, stating that parents, particularly those of children with special needs, are integral partners and must be included in the study of interventions. They were also concerned that this proposed task force's results would be "silo-ed" and not meaningfully connected to existing efforts that already address interventions and responses to learning and behavioral needs within the state. Examples of these existing efforts were then given, including another proposed task force (SB 318), which they say appears to have a significant overlap with SB 360, and question if the task forces should be combined. Other initiatives they listed and detailed include: the JJPOC's workgroups' diversion plan utilizing existing Youth Service Bureaus; the Child Health and Development Institute's intervention programs including the Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools program; Primary Mental Health; Early Childhood Consultation Partnership; and the Children's Behavioral Health Plan and its Implementation Advisory Board, with the help of funding from the Connecticut Health Foundation.

[Anne Manusky, resident, Easton, CT:](#)

Manusky wrote in opposition to SB 360, specifically in opposition to the concept of RTI itself, due to what she describes as the association of its academic applications with Common Core. She characterized Common Core as destructive to CT's public education system, and included web links and an excerpt which discuss RTI and Common Core. Finally she stated that RTI should be removed from education systems, as the push for assessments is an additional stressor on CT public schoolchildren.

Reported by: Edward Waters, Asst. Clerk

Date: 4/9/18