

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-361

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES BY

Title: REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTERS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

Vote Date: 3/14/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/8/2018

File No.: 141

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

SB 361 (sec. 1) authorizes regional educational service centers (RESCs) to enter into an agreement with one or more local or regional boards of education to provide administrative services related to the operation and management of the school district to enable the boards to carry out their duties specified in the statutes. Also (sec. 2) authorizes SDE to give special consideration to grant applications for regional (through RESCs) or joint purchasing agreements for administrative services. Such preference is already allowed for a number of other areas such as supplies, testing materials, and special education services.

Substitute Language:

The substitute language for SB 361 removes sec. 3 of the original bill that authorizes local or regional boards of education that are members of a cooperative arrangement to, for purposes of reporting expenditures of the board of education, use the total aggregate amount of expenditures of the cooperative arrangement related to the activities allowed under law (may include special education services, health care services, alternative education, and administrative services) as the expenditures of the board of education.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner of the State Department of Education (SDE):

The Commissioner of the Department of Education testified in disfavor of certain components of SB 361. Commissioner Wentzell stipulated that the Department of Education cannot support subsection (e) of section 3 according to which Local Education Agencies participating in cooperative arrangements would be allowed to report expenditures at the aggregate level

when reporting to the Department. She believes that such initiative will make it difficult to determine actual cost efficiencies and is in direct violation of ESSA which requires school level expenditures to be broken out by source of revenue. If this language is eliminated from the bill the Department indicated that it would be fully supportive of the proposal.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc. (CABE):

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc. testified in favor of SB 361. CABE stated that for educational programs to be delivered, it is imperative to remove any obstacle to school district's cooperation. CABE also stipulated that laws prohibiting RESC and COG cooperative purchasing programs when funds are involved significantly reduce opportunities for cost efficiencies.

Daniel C. Giungi, Senior Legislative Associate for the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities:

Giungi testified on behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities in favor of SB 361. Giungi stated that CCM supports the intent of SB 361 aiming at better services-sharing and cost-containing efforts between towns and cities. However, to avoid duplicating efforts, Giungi asked for the inclusion of language that would allow greater cooperation between municipalities and local and regional boards of education.

Norman M. Needleman, First Selectman of the Town of Essex:

Needleman testified in favor of SB 361. He supported the bill's initiative to allow cooperative agreements between school districts. He argued that state law is often a complication to cooperative efforts. He urged the Committee to look for a more innovative approach to cost-sharing statewide namely by looking at what defines a Local Education Agency in Connecticut law for the purposes of federal programs and for cooperative agreements to be recognized as single Local Education Agency.

Lon Seidman, Chairman of the Essex Board of Education:

Seidman testified in support of SB 361 and made recommendations for the bill to better help districts share programs and expenses. He stated that a cooperative agreement saves towns millions of dollars; nevertheless, the state does not recognize a cooperative agreement as a distinct Local Education Agency. Ideally for him, the definition of Local Education Agency should include cooperative agreements for the regionalization of services to become easier for towns.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Ray Rossomando, Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for Connecticut Education Association:

Rossomando testified on behalf of the Policy, Research, and Government Relations for Connecticut Education Association in disfavor of SB 361. Rossomando voiced concerns about the legal relationship between teachers employed by the local board of education and third-parties arguing that the latter would have management authority over contracted employees. He also asked for a clarifying language as to the intent of a local board of education's ability to book the contributions of all local boards to the cooperative as local board expenditures.

Reported by: Adeline Dubout

Date: April 3, 2018