

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-454

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL SECURITY.

Vote Date: 3/23/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/14/2018

File No.: 404

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Secs. 1 and 2 of SB 454 require that local and regional boards of education report to SDE on the required fire drills and crisis response drills they must conduct. Under current law, they must report to DESPP. It also adds to this requirement that the boards include evaluations, scores, and feedback from local law enforcement on the drills.

Sec. 3 extends the authorization for the school security infrastructure grant program to FY 19. The program provides grants to develop or improve security infrastructure in schools. It also adds references to licensed child care centers and private preschools for clarity in a number of places and specifies that licensed child care centers and private preschools are included in the group that can be awarded 10% of the funds available under the program (subsection (b)(6)) and specifies they are part of the group that is eligible for a grant equal to 50% of the eligible project costs, while adding the limitation that such grant not exceed \$50,000 (subsection (c)(6))

Furthermore, the bill allows applicants who did not receive a grant for FY 18 due to insufficient funds to resubmit the same application for a grant in FY 19 and the commissioner must give them priority.

Sec. 4 makes tech/conforming change

Sec. 5 requires emergency plans in every town and city to include protocols for the notification of an emergency to all public and nonpublic schools and child care facilities in the town or city.

Substitute language:

The substitute language makes the changes in Sec. 3 regarding licensed child care centers and private preschools and for applicants to reapply if there were insufficient funds in FY 18.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner, State of Connecticut Department of Education:**

Commissioner Wentzell wrote that the Department supported some sections of SB 454, and is generally supportive of enhancing school security, safety planning, and protocols. She specified that they fully support the new language in section 5, requiring protocols for emergency notification to all schools and child care facilities in a town or city. However, she added that SDE does not believe requirements to file school safety plans with the Department in sections 1 or 2 to be necessary. Wentzell explained that these plans are already filed with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) annually, that the DESPP has the expertise to evaluate these plans while the SDE does not. Additionally, the Commissioner believes a single point of filing will lessen confusion for boards of education.

David Wilkinson, Commissioner, State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC):

Commissioner Wilkinson wrote that the OEC is in favor of Sections 4 and 5 of SB 454. The Commissioner expressed Sections 4 and 5 of SB 454 provide important support to licensed child care programs for strengthening their security infrastructure. He added that the language closes the loop on the communication system that needs to be implemented to ensure that these child care facilities are fully informed of emergencies. Moreover, Section 19a-87g of the General Statutes as amended by HB 5169 establishes the infrastructure necessary for this notification system. He also mentioned that this bill ties in well with SB 454's inclusion of license child care in local civil preparedness advisory councils, which will help to ensure that these programs' needs and interests are known within the community.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**Representative Russell Morin, 28th District, Deputy Speaker:**

Rep. Morin testified in full support of SB 454. He believes this bill is a vital step towards better protecting students, educators, school staff in the classroom and outside the classroom. He attributed the language on fire drill and crisis response report requirements to DESPP and State Department of Education, the extension of the school security infrastructure grant, and including notification of emergencies to schools and child care facilities in local emergency plans to making Connecticut schools safer. Moreover, he believes the submission of reports to both DESPP and SDE will help the state know the feasibility of each plan and determine if such plans are the safest and effective ones.

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

Goldberg wrote on behalf of the PTA in strong support SB 454, especially at this time of heightened attention to school safety. Furthermore, she particularly believes that submitting

reports on crisis response drills to DESPP and State Department of Education will help create collaboration throughout the state on best practices for keeping students safe in school.

Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS):

Niehoff wrote that CAS supports SB 454 because they too require school districts to submit reports on emergency drills to DESPP and the Department of Education. In addition, she expressed support to extending the school security infrastructure grant program for another year and including notification of emergencies to schools and child care facilities in local emergency plans.

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

CABE wrote that they support SB 454 and the continuation of the school security grant, which they described as serving districts in new installations and in updating infrastructure to best secure school buildings.

Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM):

The CCM wrote in support of SB 454. They specified that they support section 2's requirement of reports from boards of education to the DESPP and the State Dept. of Education detailing emergency response drills and evaluations provided by local law enforcement. They concluded that this requirement for annual submission is not overly burdensome, and these reports will help determine the emergency preparedness of school districts and will assist in developing best practices and addressing shortcomings. They also wrote on the subject of section 3 that funding for school security has been crucial in mitigating risks and threats to facilities and in providing a safe learning environment, and they therefore support this additional funding. Finally, they commented that section 5's requirement of notification protocol in emergency operations plans was a natural formal inclusion, as in many instances emergency management directors have already taken these into account in the development of their plan.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST):

Gara wrote that the COST supports SB 454, particularly the extension of the school security infrastructure grant program for an additional year. They described the grant program as having been a successful tool in assisting towns in improving security infrastructure in schools and keeping children and employees safe.

Donald Williams, Jr., Executive Director, Connecticut Education Association (CEA):

Williams wrote that the CEA supports SB 454, particularly continuing the program of grants for school safety improvements. He described the underlying statute as based on the Safe Schools Program and stated that he supported this program at the Education Committee's public hearing in February 2007, and that it was modified in 2013 in response to the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

Reported by: Edward Waters, Asst. Clerk

Date: 4/10/18