

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-458

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE

**Title:** EDUCATION STATUTES.

**Vote Date:** 3/23/2018

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/14/2018

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Education Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill makes various revisions and additions to the education statutes as detailed below.

### **Section 1**

This section requires annual student graduation rate data collected for the State Department of Education's (SDE) public school information system to include segregated data relating to student enrollment in or graduation from, middle college programs, early college high school programs, and CT Early College Opportunity programs. It requires the same segregated data to be collected for student enrollment in and graduation from, higher education institutions.

### **Section 2**

This section requires SDE in collaboration with the Office of Higher Education, to study funding for middle college programs, early college high school programs, and CT Early College Opportunity programs and report back to the General Assembly by January 1, 2019.

### **Section 3**

Exempts from the fingerprinting/records check laws teachers of noncredit adult classes or adult education activities who are employed by a board of education and are not required to hold a teaching certificate.

### **Section 4**

This section adds a new type of judicial facility to be eligible for reimbursement under the excess cost grant by making boards of education responsible for providing general and special education services to children detained in juvenile residential facilities. This legislative change was requested by the Judicial Branch.

**Substitute Language** removes Section 4 entirely, which made boards of education responsible for providing general and special education services to children detained in juvenile residential facilities located in their school districts.

**EFFECTIVE DATE: Section 1 & 3, July 1, 2018, Section 2 from passage**

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

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

**Section 1**

Commissioner Wentzell testified that the rules for calculating graduation rates are established by the U.S. Department of Education in conformance with federal education laws including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). She went on to say that if this legislation is passed that the Department will plan to identify high school students who are also participating in these programs and will continue to apply the federal rules for graduation rate calculations. Finally, she thought it important to mention that if a student has met all the requirements for graduation by year 4 and the student continues in an early college high school program, the district will not receive ECS funding for that student.

**Section 2**

SDE supports section 2 of SB 458 and explained that there are currently four Early College Opportunity programs operating statewide without the necessary statute in place to account and potentially pay for the students as they enter their 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> years. SDE recognizes the imminent need to resolve this, and will work with the Office of Higher Education to find a resolution.

**Section 4**

SDE expressed that they will continue to work with the Court Services Division within the Judicial Branch on this legislation.

**External Affairs Division, State of Connecticut Judicial Branch:**

The Judicial Branch submitted testimony specifically on Section 4 of this bill which was drafted at their request. They are seeking to add juvenile *residential* facilities to the legislation that was passed in 2011 that specifically stated that local education agencies (LEAs) are responsible for education in juvenile *detention* facilities. According to their testimony, their proposal would:

- 1) Allow school districts that are responsible for the provision of educational services to receive a state agency placement grant for the payment of tuition for these educational services.
- 2) Allow the Judicial Branch to notify an LEA if one of its students is admitted to a juvenile residential treatment program.
- 3) Require public school districts to continue to assume responsibility for children in residential treatment even in the child has been suspended, expelled, or otherwise left the school district.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **David Downes, Connecticut Association for Adult & Continuing Education (CAACE):**

David Downes of CAACE testified in support of Section 3 of SB 458. He explained that this section reinstates a provision that was previously in the law that allows school districts discretion regarding the level of background checks required for adult education, non-credit class instructors. He explained that a bill restoring this provision in statute passed by a wide margin in the House last session but died on the Senate calendar.

### **Camara Stokes Hudson, Associate Policy Fellow, CT Voices for Children:**

CT Voices for Children submitted testimony in support of Section 1 of SB 458. They believe this legislation will enable better tracking of student enrollment and success in early and middle college programs which will help the state create a more comprehensive picture of the college and career readiness of our students. They went on to stress the importance of college and career readiness to the long term economic growth of our state. Having this data, is helpful in this area because it will allow for better data sharing and better information upon which to make policy and budget decisions.

### **Lori Wyrebek, Coordinator, Farmington Public Schools:**

Lori Wyrebek of the Farmington Public Schools submitted testimony in support of Section 3. She runs one of the largest continuing education programs in the state and says that if district discretion is not restored to the background check process, it will be detrimental to the program in Farmington and many others around the state. The instructors who offer a class either do it for free or they are paid \$30 for a one or more session class. The cost to each instructor to be fingerprinted would be more than they will make to teach the course. Also, since many of them teach the same class in multiple districts, and the checks are not universal, they could incur even greater costs.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed

**Reported by: Amy L. Orschel**

**Date: March 29, 2018**