



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee**

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SB 874 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

CABE is generally supportive of efforts to examine opportunities to share or consolidate services with the goal of enhancing educational opportunities in the most efficient manner. We are also very supportive of disseminating the many existing best practices utilized by school districts. We offer the following specific observations on the bill before you.

There are multiple references to the joint employment of superintendents by boards of education. It is critical to include another cost effective option - the employment of part-time superintendents. These are generally individuals with years of experience who are retired from full-time employment and are available to our smaller districts, bringing their expertise in a cost effective manner. Approximately 25 districts currently employ a part-time superintendent.

Section 4 – requiring boards of education to prepare a report on services they have shared or consolidated along with a “detailed cost expenditure analysis of such consolidations” by September 15, 2019 can be extremely burdensome in the cases where these shared services have existed for many years and have become the way of doing business in the community. This would require the boards to determine the current cost of providing these services separately.

This section also requires municipalities and boards of education to develop a report on which services can be shared or consolidated by January 1, 2020 (line 204), while requiring the Commission on Shared Services to develop a report with preliminary recommendations concerning enhanced shared services by February 1, 2020, (line 93). We are concerned that staffing resources at both the state and local level will make it very difficult to meet the multitude of reporting requirements in these provisions.

Section 6 – the additional requirement for approval by the local legislative body for the withdrawal from an agreement to jointly employ a superintendent is an unnecessary restriction on the statutory authority of boards of education to employ a superintendent.

Section 7 – the requirement that each regional board of education also establish a regional board of finance is another unnecessary burden.

Section 10 – currently boards of education have the authority to expel students, under very limited circumstances, for conduct that is seriously disruptive of the educational process or a danger to persons or property. Limiting expulsions to those situations where the action also violates a publicized policy may place other students at risk. It is impossible for boards of education to anticipate every seriously disruptive activity students may engage in and identify those explicitly in policy.

Section 11 – CAFE supports the provisions of this section which provide for recommendations around the development of training and reporting requirements for pediatricians and childcare providers to better identify a child’s need for special education services, incorporation of training for trauma and social emotional learning into teacher preparation programs and professional development, and improvement of efforts to meet the needs of students with special needs. It is important to continue to evaluate ways to meet the needs of all students in a cost effective manner.

Section 13 – while lines 463-465 reference a study and recommendations around professional development for social emotional learning, lines 562-564 incorporate this into the professional development requirements. We urge you to provide one year from legislative action to local implementation.

Section 14 – creates new professional development requirements effective July 1, 2019. Many boards of education are already working with experts to provide their staff with social emotional learning, trauma informed instruction, and behavior management strategies, as these have become recognized as critical skills. We would urge you to delay the effective date until July 1, 2020 to allow for effective implementation.

Section 16 - CAFE supports the provisions of this section, addressing the need for boards of education to promote social emotional learning, trauma-informed instruction, and behavior management de-escalation techniques for all certified staff. CAFE has worked with Dr. Marc Brackett and other experts in this area to raise the awareness of the importance of these issues.

Section 23 and 24 – CAFE opposes the reductions in the sliding scale reimbursement percentage for school construction projects, including those of the incorporated or endowed high schools and academies.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.