Education Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1021
Title: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PILOT PROGRAM.
Vote Date: 3/15/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations
PH Date: 3/13/2019

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
This bill would establish a pilot program to establish community schools and would outline start-up and implementation grants for our alliance districts. Community schools would integrate community services to public schools, and more easily access the students and families who attend. Community schools are designed to combine academics with health and social services, community development and parental engagement.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Department of Education: Commissioner Wentzell does not support this bill and cites fiscal and capacity concerns. She testifies establishing this pilot program would be a monumental task for the committee, diverting staff from other school improvement programs. The Commissioner is also concerned that there is no funding for the grants.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:
Ray Rossomondo, Director of Policy, Research and Government Relations, Connecticut Education Association (CEA): CEA strongly supports SB 1021. They believe this bill will have an incredible impact on our most deserving students. The testimony cites examples of successes in Cincinnati, Austin, Baltimore and the Bronx where they have decreased achievement gaps, increased graduation rates, and plummeted chronic absenteeism. CEA also states that a school coordinator position is integral to implementing a successful school
strategy, and the grants available in this bill would ensure that position is afforded. They also speak to the work of The Bridgeport Educational Alliance for Public Schools (BEAPS), an organization dedicated to initiating community school strategies in Bridgeport. This bill would turn their research work into action.

**Connecticut Students for a Dream:** CT Students for a Dream strongly support this bill. They testify that the creation of community schools would bridge the gap between community service providers and the public education system. They see community schools as an innovative practice which allows students and their community thrive.

**Jocelyn Ault, Education and Family Advocate:** Ms. Ault strongly supports this bill. She believes a comprehensive community school program could turn around struggling schools, end the school-to-prison-pipeline and positively impact the community as a whole.

**Gary Peluchette, President, Bridgeport Education Association:** Mr. Peluchette, a teacher in Bridgeport Public Schools for 34 years testified to the importance of community to a school system. It is his “hope that the Community Schools initiative can rebuild the bridge between schools and their surrounding community”.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

See above testimony of Commissioner Wentzell.

**Reported by:** Garnet McLaughlin 3/28/19