Bill No.: SB-1023
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPELLED STUDENTS BY BOARDS OF EDUCATION.
Vote Date: 3/29/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 3/13/2019

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would require that local Boards of Education develop and implement policies for alternative educational opportunities for expelled students and submit those plans to the Department of Education for approval annually.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE: LCO No. 6552
The original bill would have required that students of the age of eighteen be placed in adult education, but this substitute language would allow students of eighteen to be enrolled in alternative education.

AMMENDMENT A:

This Amendment would change lines forty-seven through forty-eight of the Proposed Substitute language LCO No. 6552. In short, this amendment would require that alternative education be held to the standards developed by the State Board of Education and would not allow local boards of education to develop and implement their own plans.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner, State Department of Education (SDE):
SDE cannot support this bill. This bill would not require that alternative education programs have uniform educational quality standards. This bill is ambiguous and does not specifically require the implementation of Connecticut Core Standards. Allowing local boards of education to develop their own plans of alternative education for expelled students would
result in quality inconsistency. This legislation should make the Standards for Educational Opportunities for Students Who Have Been Expelled mandatory for all alternative education programs.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Subira Gordon, Executive Director, ConnCAN:
Director Gordon supports this bill. In many cases students who have been expelled from public schools also experience economic and social insecurity. Connecticut needs to care for these disadvantaged individuals by creating a pathway for the future of expelled students. This bill helps to create an equal playing field for all students.

Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut (SEEK-CT):
SEEK-CT supports this bill, but would like a seat the table to ensure that special education student’s IEPs are being met in this program. Expelled students frequently drop out or go to prison, investing in them now will save the state tax dollars in the long run.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance:
Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance opposes this bill. This bill would remove the obligation of local boards of education from implementing comprehensive alternative education programs for expelled students. When minimum hours of instruction for expelled students are reduced, the likelihood a student drops out increases. Expulsion disproportionally affects black and brown boys and girls.

Connecticut Voices for Children:
CT Voices for Children opposes the removal of the Standards for Education Opportunities for students who have been expelled, but supports the expansion of the number of students who would receive benefits from receiving alternative education. Sometimes when children are struggling the most they can act out and be expelled, those children need the most support. The SDE standards that were passed two years ago to support expelled students’ needs to be observed.

Marisa Halm, Director, TeamChild Juvenile Justice Project, Center for Children’s Advocacy (CCA):
Director Halm opposes this bill. This bill would reverse the standards recently passed through legislation and established by SDE for the alternative education of expelled students. This bill dilutes the rights of expelled students to receive an education and will disproportionately disenfranchised students of color. Additionally, this bill unfairly forces eighteen years old to be enrolled in adult education.

Agata Raszczyk-Lawska, Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.:
Ms. Raszczyk-Lawska opposes this bill. This bill would create a loophole for towns to bypass the Standards for Educational Opportunities for Students Who Have Been Expelled. This loophole will result in inconsistent and inequitable expelled student learning programs. Bad alternative education programs can result in drop outs and prison pipelines. The required enrollment of eighteen year olds into adult education program rather than alternative
education programs after expulsion runs the risk of violating the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Reported by: Colin Carroll

Date: 4/5/2019