



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut General Assembly
Housing Committee
Testimony of Commissioner Miguel A. Cardona
February 18, 2020

Good Morning Representative McGee, Senator Anwar, Representative Rochelle, Senator McCrory and members of the Housing Committee. My Name is Miguel Cardona and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Education. I am sorry that I am unable to join you in person today, but I would like to offer you written testimony regarding SB 108, An Act Establishing The Open Choice Vouchers Pilot Program.

The Department is generally supportive of this proposal but understand that the fiscal resources necessary would be diverted from other programs. SDE looks forward to engaging with the committee and other state agencies to understand what the impact of diverting resources from other programs to this proposal would be. We believe this proposal promotes housing choices for families who have already made the determination to send their child to a district participating in the Open Choice Program. It seeks to give those families the opportunity to benefit the next generation by raising their children in the district in which they attend school and it takes a positive steps toward alleviating the poverty concentration in urban settings.

Currently many families who participate in the Open Choice program do not feel connected to the communities in which their children are attending school. Those children not only have long bus rides to and from school on a daily basis, but are often not able to benefit from after school programs or participate in afterschool extracurricular activities. We believe this bill would help alleviate those issues and allow parents and students to have a more positive educational experience.

As this bill moves forward, the Department would like to be involved in conversations to ensure that the final proposal is in line with our latest stipulated agreement in Sheff vs. O'Neill. I appreciate you taking this testimony into consideration and look forward to continued conversations.