
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6621

AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.

SUMMARY

This bill makes three unrelated changes in the education statutes. It narrows the topics for which a board of education can be petitioned to hold a public hearing. It also specifies permissible equipment for conducting in-school vision screenings. Finally, it establishes a 14-member task force to study special education services and funding.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021, except the task force provisions take effect upon passage.

§ 1 — PETITIONED BOARD OF EDUCATION HEARINGS

Current law allows 1% of a town's electors to petition the board of education to hold a public hearing on any question. The bill limits the hearing topic to only questions related to the board's provision of education.

§ 2 — VISION SCREENING EQUIPMENT

Current law allows the annual in-school vision screening in public schools for grades K-1 and 3-5 to be performed using (1) a Snellen chart or (2) an equivalent screening device, such as an automated vision screening device. The bill instead specifies that the screening may be performed using (1) a Snellen chart or an equivalent screening device or (2) an automated vision screening device. This allows for use of an automated vision screening device that is not equivalent to a Snellen chart.

§ 3 — SPECIAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

The bill establishes a 14-member task force to study the provision of special education services and special education funding.

Study Scope

The task force's study must examine the following topics:

1. provision of special education services and related services, including whether local and regional boards of education provide these services (a) directly, (b) by partnering with regional education service centers (RESCs), (c) by contracting with a private special education services provider, or (d) as part of a cooperative arrangement between two or more boards;
2. the cost of providing special education and related services, including the total aggregate amount per school district per year, and its annual percentage increase or decrease per school district;
3. the special education cost effect on boards' minimum budget requirement; and
4. the state reimbursement level to boards for special education, including the (a) total reimbursement amount submitted by each school district per year and the amount received per year and (b) percentage increase or decrease per year of the difference between the total amount submitted and the total amount received for each school district (though it is unclear in the bill how many years the task force must study).

Membership

Table 1 describes the task force membership and the members' appointing authorities. Under the bill, all appointments must be made within 30 days after this section takes effect, and the appointing authority must fill any vacancy.

Table 1: Special Education Task Force Membership

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Member(s)</i>
House speaker	Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) representative

	Parent or guardian of a public school student receiving special education services
Senate president pro tempore	Connecticut Education Association (CEA) representative Parent or guardian of a public school student receiving special education services
House majority leader	American Federation of Teachers – Connecticut (AFT) representative Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) representative
Senate majority leader	Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education representative RESC Alliance representative
House minority leader	Connecticut Association of School Administrators (CASA) representative Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) representative
Senate minority leader	Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) representative Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) representative
N/A	Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) executive director
N/A	Education commissioner, or commissioner's designee

Leadership, Meetings, and Staff

The bill requires the CAPSS executive director to serve as the task force chairperson, who must schedule the first meeting within 60 days after this section takes effect. The Education Committee's administrative staff must serve as the task force's staff.

Under the bill, the task force must submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2020. The task force must terminate on the day it submits the report or January 1, 2022, whichever is later.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 38 Nay 0 (03/22/2021)