



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee**

March 8, 2021

SB 976 AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION.

SB 977 AN ACT CONCERNING VIRTUAL LEARNING.

**HB 6556 AN ACT ADDRESSING ISSUES CREATED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON PUBLIC
EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT.**

HB 6557 AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education supports the provisions of SB 976, which would establish a task force to study issues related to the provision and funding of special education. CABE continues to advocate that Congress meet its long-standing commitment to fund 40% of the cost of special education. In addition, we urge the legislature to remove the cap on the Special Education Excess Cost Grant. Continuation of the cap on this grant creates an increased hardship on local districts as these costs continue to rise. Removal of the cap will restore the safety net available to districts for these extraordinary education costs.

CABE supports the provisions of SB 977, which provides for a review by the State Department of Education of the provision of virtual learning in our K-12 schools. We urge you to ensure that this review include identification of resources needed at the local level to effectively deliver instruction in the remote model, and to provide that this be a local option rather than a mandated delivery system.

CABE opposes the provisions in sections 5 and 6 of SB 977 which would add to the existing extensive professional development requirements training in the provision of virtual learning. This professional development should be delivered on an as needed basis if a local district plans to utilize a virtual learning model. To place an ongoing requirement for all staff utilizes precious professional development time. There may be greater needs in individual districts for professional development in other areas, such as social and emotional learning.

CABE supports the provisions in HB 6556 which require the State Department of Education to develop learning loss and student disengagement mitigation strategies, as well as provide resources and technical assistance to boards of education. We know that despite the best efforts of school districts, the pandemic has created significant learning challenges as well as social and emotional challenges for all students, particularly our most vulnerable students. Supporting our students by accelerating their learning opportunities and supporting their social and emotional well-being will take a sustained effort at the state and local level. We urge you to insure that the State Department of Education have sufficient staff to meet the requirements of this legislation. They have made outstanding efforts throughout the past year to support school districts, students, staff and families during the pandemic. We urge you to consider the resource needs as you increase responsibilities for the Department.

CABE is committed to realizing the needs of the whole child, and in HB 6557, An Act Concerning Social and Emotional Learning we have concerns with implementation. School districts across the state need various social and emotional programs and services and do struggle to meet the needs of the students. As budgets are being developed we know that many districts are seeking more positions to support student and staff. Mandating ratios

does not provide the flexibility needed by districts. We applaud the State Department of Education establishing a state wide social-emotional support program to assist districts, but recognize those efforts can only go so far. Additional mandates on the amount of time a counselor spends on different responsibilities in their day will confine the delivery of services. While providing professional development to educators on social- emotional is important, we urge you to avoid adding additional mandates and instead conduct a review of existing professional development requirements, allowing districts to prioritize the needs of their staff.

We strongly support the appropriation of resources to SDE for a state-wide social-emotional support program.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.