

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6617

AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION OF STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS AND REVISIONS TO THE SCHOOL

Title: BUILDING PROJECTS STATUTES.

Vote Date: 3/22/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Finance, Revenue and Bonding

PH Date: 3/17/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Section 1: Authorizes grant commitments for 16 new or reauthorized school construction projects committing the state to approximately \$425 million in grants to towns.

Section 2: Requires that all plans for school building projects submitted on and after July 1, 2022, to include the installation of water bottle filling stations.

Section 3: Requires local or regional boards of education, rather than the town or regional school district, to establish or reestablish school building committees for school building projects.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Kosta Diamantis, Deputy Secretary, OPM; Director, Office of School Construction

Grants, Review and Audit: This bill is the proposed school construction Priority List projects for this year, reviewed by the Department of Administrative Services and approved by the School Construction Priority List Review Committee. This proposed Priority List has estimated total project costs of \$637,710,083. If the legislature and Governor approve of House Bill 6617, that would set the State's maximum grant amount for these projects at \$392,874,668. This is the upper limit for these projects. The Office of School Construction Grants, Review and Audit conducts extensive review of these projects. Preliminary meetings enable us to present the true cost of project construction work. We will continue to work with these school districts, which may lead to costs lower than the authorized maximum amount.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Sen. Tony Hwang, Deputy Senate Republican Leader:

I am proud as the state senator of Westport in the 28th Senate district to enthusiastically speak about Westport's Coleytown Middle School. This school serves students in grades 6 through 8 is long overdue for a total renovation and redesign caused by mold and health risk concerns affecting students, teachers and staff.

Carl Chisem, President, Municipal Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 506;

Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Executive Director, Connecticut Oral Health Initiative;

Lisa Galske, Executive Director, CTAHPERD; Sanford Pilz, Teacher;

Merrill Gay, Executive Director, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance;

Judy Goldberg, VP Government Relations, Connecticut PTA;

Zak Leavy, Legislative and Political Coordinator, AFSCME Council 4;

Sally Mancini, Director of Advocacy Resources, UConn Rudd Center for FPO;

Scott Schoem, President, CT Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Jim Williams, Government Relations Director, American Heart Association CT

The cost of a water refill station is nominal in the process of construction and can save money over time. Water intake by children is critical to their overall well-being and helps prevent dental decay. They all ask that additional language be included to ensure that there are minimal standards to follow with regards to the placement of these stations. It needs to be stated that there should be at least one water bottle filling station per 100 students; at least one water bottle filling station on each floor or wing of the building; and at least one water bottle filling station in all food service areas.

Keith R. Brothers, Business Manager, CT District Council of Laborers;

John Butts, Executive Director, Associated General Contractors of Connecticut

Investing in our country's infrastructure involves funding of our public school construction. The benefits derived from major investments in infrastructure involve of the creation of construction jobs, as well as the economic activity the investments generate. The amended language would provide that the authorization of a public school district to allow construction managers to self-perform a portion of the work under several conditions.

Connecticut Education Association: Donald Williams, Executive Director;

Ray Rossomando, Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations

Reusable water bottles make it more convenient for students and staff to drink more water and they help reduce the spread of germs and infection from the sharing of water fountains. We are also dealing with schools infected with mold, airborne pathogens, and infestations, which has become even more concerning with the potential spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19. They suggest adding school construction bill bond funding earmarked for HVAC inspection, maintenance, repair, and enhancements.

Michael Thompson, Executive Director, ASMRCC; Executive Director, MCAC:

Utilizing grants for public school construction creates good paying jobs for our residents and has a trickle-down effect throughout our local economy. These projects provide our education system with updates in the areas of sustainability, energy efficiency, and improvements to health and safety for both students and faculty. If an amendment is attached allowing construction managers to self-perform on school construction projects, they ask that several requirements be added to protect subcontractors.

Mary Yordon, Divisional Vice President, AFT-Connecticut:

We have been installing water bottle filling stations in many new schools, and they do reduce single use plastic water bottles by both students and staff members. The cheaper ones, or ones with a gooseneck-type filler spout don't work as well as the ones with interior pipes. They also support the need for school building committees. Renovations as new can lead to unfortunate outcomes, such as insufficient classrooms or bathrooms, which could have been avoided with a school building committee to oversee construction. One of these committees contributed enormously to troubleshooting some challenging situations when we renovated to create the Norwalk Early Childhood Center.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

There are no sources of opposition for this bill.

Reported by: Dallas Emerle

Date: 3/24/2021