



Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

HB 6617 AAC Authorization Of State Grant Commitments For School Building Projects And Revisions To The School Building Projects Statutes -Section 2, Subsection 6

Testimony of Merrill Gay

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 6617. My name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. While you are accustomed to hearing me testify for the Alliance on issues related to young children before they get to the public schools, I offer testimony on this bill because many public schools offer preschool in their buildings. We believe that it is important that you set standards for the school buildings that are built or renovated with state assistance.

Specifically I would like to express my support for House Bill 6617 which in Section 2, subsection 6, will require that any newly constructed public school, or a public school undergoing major renovations, include water bottle filling stations. I would also like to request that language be added to this section to strengthen the bill.

Section 2, subsection 6 of this bill contains language that would require any newly constructed public school, or any public school undergoing major renovations, include water bottle filling stations in their plans. While I am in strong support of this language, I respectfully request that it be amended to include language that will 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.” The addition of this language will make it a stronger bill and set a clear standard.

Childhood obesity is a growing problem that leads to a lifetime of health problems. In New Britain, where I live, our Public Health Department was the first in the state to track childhood obesity over time¹. This study documented how prevalent childhood obesity is in town, the connection with Asthma, absence from school and student achievement. Increasing the availability of drinking water helps children develop the habit of drinking water when they are thirsty and is considered a best practice to prevent obesity. Water bottle filling stations make it possible for children to fill a water bottle and have it with them when they are thirsty. They also provide a more hygienic alternative to the drinking fountain.

I would like to close by saying that that the price difference between a traditional drinking fountain and a drinking fountain/water bottle filling station is pretty small and in the context of a

¹<https://health.uconn.edu/population-health/healthy-living/childhood-obesity-and-asthma-in-the-consolidated-school-district-of-new-britain-ct/>

multi million school construction or renovation project is almost negligible. Making water bottle filling stations the norm is a simple low cost way to make the healthy alternative, the easy alternative.