



## Education Committee

Public Hearing -March 17, 2021

### **HB 6617 AAC Authorization of State Grant Commitments For School Building Projects And Revisions To The School Building Projects**

#### **Statutes-**

*Section 2, Subsection 6- Water Bottle Filling Stations*

Jim Williams- American Heart Association

My name is Jim Williams, and I am the Government Relations Director for the American Heart Association in CT. The American Heart Association (AHA) is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. Our mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives, and we take our mission very seriously here in CT. I would like to thank the leadership and members of the Education Committee for providing me with the opportunity to speak in strong favor of House Bill 6617, specifically Section 2, subsection 6, and to **request an amendment that will ensure that there are minimal standards to follow with regards to the placement of these water bottle filling stations (proposed amendment language below).**

#### **Proposed Amendment**

Section 2, subsection 6 of this bill contains language that would require any newly constructed public school, or any public school undergoing major renovations to include water bottle filling stations in their plans. To ensure that there are minimal standards to follow with regards to placement of these stations we strongly urge you to amend the bill by adding:

***"There must 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."***

I feel that with the requested amended language that this will be a much stronger bill for which we will be enthusiastically supportive.

## Why Water Bottle Filling Stations Now?

All kids, no matter where they live, should have access to water in school. Water is a basic human need- something kids cannot live without. Water plays an important role in keeping kids healthy. Drinking water helps children's muscle joints and tissues, improves their digestion, and keeps their growing bodies hydrated.<sup>1</sup> Drinking water can help children learn better, improve their short-term memory, and improve their fine motor skills and visual attention, which is important to learning activities such as reading.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, children who drink water instead of sugary drinks are less likely to have cavities<sup>3</sup>, and can help kids grow up at a healthy weight.<sup>4</sup>

The problem is, accessing drinking water in school during the current COVID-19 pandemic is difficult at best, as those traditional water fountains are typically the largest collector of germs in the school, and most are turned off due to fears of spreading those germs. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) now encourages staff and students to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of traditional water fountains.

Touchless water bottle filling stations solves this problem and will ensure that all kids will have access to clean drinking water at no charge while in school. The cost of these stations is nominal in the process of construction and can save dollars over time. I believe that with the above requested amendment, that this bill will be deserving of your vote.

Sincerely,

Jim Williams  
American Heart Association  
Government Relations Director- CT  
[James.Williams@Heart.org](mailto:James.Williams@Heart.org)

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