

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5038

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

**Title:** CONCERNING EDUCATION.

**Vote Date:** 3/25/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

**PH Date:** 3/21/2022

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Sen. Will Haskell, 26th Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The bill implements the Governor's budget recommendations related to education. The bill includes; funding for the settlement of the Sheff litigation, a change expanding the number of school districts allowed to be designated as Alliance Districts, and the creation of the graduated alliance district.

The bill also makes several, changes to the Education Cost Sharing Grant formula, equalization aid grants.

Also, the bill transfers several governmental functions of the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education to the Technical Education and Career System.

Lastly, the bill requires each high school student under the authority of the State Board of Education to complete the FAFSA as a prerequisite for graduation.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

[Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner Connecticut Department of Education](#): "The Department is in full support of this proposal, which implements the Governor's budget recommendations related to education. It includes important provisions related to funding the settlement of the Sheff litigation, reauthorizing the Alliance District Program, making technical revisions to the Education Cost Sharing Grant formula, extending the cap on transportation grants, and making technical revisions to the statutes governing the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System. Lastly, this bill requires the completion of the FAFSA as a

prerequisite for graduation, starting with the class of 2025. We strongly support this graduation requirement and the robust complement of resources included for districts that will be necessary to implement this bill successfully. The FAFSA is a critical milestone for students choosing to attend college or a trade school, and unlocks thousands of dollars in federal, state, institutional, and private aid.”

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[Ashley Zane, Government Affairs Associate, Connecticut Business and Industry Association:](#)

“I am here in support of HB 5038, “An Act Implementing the Governor’s Budget Recommendations Concerning Education.” CBIA, in partnership with our affiliate ReadyCT, supports the continued effort to separate the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System from the State Department of Education.”

[Mary Yordon, Divisional Vice President, AFTCT PreK12 Council:](#)

“The AFTCT agrees that the FAFSA is an important tool to provide access to college experiences for those who might otherwise believe that college is beyond their reach. We appreciate the changes that alleviate some of our concerns, including a provision that a local board can, for example, exempt a student who is unable to have a parent signature, and those who have a career-ready credential, or plans for the military or apprenticeships. We won’t have extra staff to do this, and remain concerned about the resulting impact on staff retention and burnout. We do support the bill, nonetheless.”

[Wesley L. Winterbottom, Program Coordinator, Public Utility Management Programs, Gateway Community College:](#)

“Section 24 of the bill suggests that the executive director of the Technical Education and Career System convene regional or state-wide meetings to address the workforce needs of Connecticut’s utilities. These meetings will provide another important way to make students and their parents aware of the numerous and varied utility employment opportunities available and the training options offered.”

[Jennifer Widness, President, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges:](#)

“CCIC strongly supports this provision of the bill, and our member institutions stand willing to support districts with implementation through technical assistance and training sessions for students and their families, as we have the last few years. Financial aid staff have supported virtual and in-person trainings through the #CTCollegeBound initiative and have volunteered to support districts involved with the state’s FAFSA Challenge effort.”

[Lori Vitagliano, Government and Public Relations Specialist, Regional Water Authority:](#)

“The RWA encourages the members of the Education Committee to pass Section 24 of House Bill 5038 An Act Implementing the Governor’s Budget Recommendations. We believe this bill will promote additional collaboration to ensure utilities can keep the water flowing and the lights on by hiring students educated in our excellent technical and public high school systems who are later trained by Gateway and SCSU to meet the needs of the utility industry.”

[Robert Trefry, Chair of board, Connecticut Technical Education and Career System \(CTECS\):](#)

“The provisions in this bill are not a prerequisite for CTECS to become an independent state agency, as that has already been established by prior enactments of the General Assembly. This bill is necessary, however, to ensure that the statutes that create CTECS are internally

coherent and create a clear structure for the proper functioning of the agency. Thank you for your consideration.”

[Mike Muszynski, State and Federal Relations Manager, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities](#): “The adjustments recommended in HB 5038 are intended to maintain the gradual increase of the grants for some districts, while gradually decreasing the grants of other districts, until all districts are receiving their fully funded ECS grant as determined by the statutory formula. In addition, the bill addresses some irregularities with the current ECS structure and ensures a gradual and consistent process.”

[Amy Dowell, State Director, Education Reform Now CT](#): “We write specifically in support of Section 36 of this bill, which would require students in each graduating class, starting in 2025, to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). .... This bill would prioritize the needs of students and families by informing their options for financial aid, and by giving them support in their schools to fill out the necessary paperwork. Importantly, opt-out measures and waivers will also protect the interests of students and families who do not want to apply for aid. By having students default to filling out the form, the bill ensures that—at a minimum—all students are aware of the possibility of federal aid and are making a conscientious choice to apply, or not apply.”

[Kate Dias, President, Connecticut Education Association](#):” CEA supports the governor’s budget for education. We applaud the governor’s commitment to phasing in the full ECS formula, including a hold-harmless provision for certain districts that would see untimely declines in funding. We understand that committee members are considering other adjustments to the formula and other grant programs for greater coherency. Ultimately, we support investments in public education that will fairly lift all boats, and not unfairly pit one school funding program against another.”

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

[Andrew Feinstein, Legislative Chair, Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut](#): “H.B. 5038 is the Governor’s Budget Bill, but it contains numerous provisions dealing with the newly independent Technical Education and Career System (TECS). Connecticut’s vocational and technical high schools have a long history of discriminating against students with disabilities, both in admittance and in retention. Last session, the Legislature stripped these high 4 schools of the legal authority to so discriminate. So, section 10 of H.B. 5038 needs to be amended to state that the TECS will provide the programming, services, and accommodations needed for students with disabilities to succeed in the program of the high school. And the board for the TECS, created in section 20, needs to include a representative of students with disabilities to ensure that the new TECS system does not revert to the discriminatory practices of the past.”

[Connecticut Association of School Business Officials](#): “We request that the Education Committee recommend that the State cover the unreimbursed cost of the paid and reduced priced meals and allow all school food program meals to be served free of charge for at least one more year as our programs and families continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic. Connecticut is projecting significant budget surpluses for FY22 and FY23 and hope that a small part of the surplus for FY23 be used to help address this problem.”

[Julieth Callejas, Interim Administrative Director, End Hunger Connecticut!](#): “End Hunger Connecticut! (EHC!) urges the State of Connecticut to allocate funds to help schools continue to provide meals at no-cost to families during the 2022-2023 school year through the School Lunch (NSLP) and Breakfast Programs (SBP). We stand in full support of the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) and national antihunger organizations such as the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) who call on leaders to extend nutrition waivers and advocate for the permanent implementation of healthy school meals for all students.”

[Kate Murphy, Food Service Director, Naugatuck Public Schools](#): “The School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) requests that the State of Connecticut support school nutrition by budgeting for supplemental funding for school year 2022-2023 to ensure that we can continue to offer meals at no charge to all students across the state as part of the School Breakfast (SBP) and Lunch Program (NSLP) at the current higher reimbursement rate.”

All testimony can be found on the [CGA website](#).

**Reported by: Matthew Boucher**

**Date: 03/29/22**