

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5287

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING REMOTE LEARNING IN CONNECTICUT.

**Vote Date:** 3/11/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/4/2022

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Education Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This legislation allows a regional board of education to authorize remote learning for students in grades kindergarten through twelve in the school year commencing on July 1, 2023.

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

None expressed.

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

### **Subira Gordon, Executive Director, ConnCAN**

"The pandemic highlighted how flexible we must be in building a high-quality education system for our students. Additionally, we learned that many students benefited directly from a remote learning model, and it allowed for several innovations that we likely would not have been prepared to make. That being said, Connecticut must build high-quality remote learning opportunities for students K-12. That way, if a stoppage of learning occurs, or we must meet the specific needs of certain students, we have a vetted, well-designed system in place."

### **House Republicans Office, CT General Assembly**

"While unequivocally traditional in-person learning is the best and most effective model for educating students, we acknowledge that the traditional model is not always possible or a best fit for every student. For that reason, the House Republicans proposed this session an

alternative K-12 online education for children who are unable to participate in in-school education. There are kids who are unable to participate in traditional school because of medical concerns, they've been prohibited from attending, or because an in-person environment is not an appropriate fit. However, the state not only has a constitutional obligation to educate these children, but also has a moral obligation to ensure that they are given every opportunity to succeed. A virtual educational experience would help fill the gap that currently exists for these children."

**Mike Muszynski, State and Federal Relations Manager, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities**

"The pandemic has impacted our lives in a variety of ways. Our students and teachers throughout the State have likely been most impacted. They have been forced to go from traditional classroom instruction to a virtual online environment with limited guidance and support. Some districts have been more successful than others, and while we are hopeful that the pandemic will subside and allow for traditional classroom education to continue, virtual learning will likely become an important component of our education system for years to come. HB 5287 will enhance uniformity and provide direction for schools to effectively and adequately implement virtual learning. CCM would recommend that any standards developed be a guide rather than a prescribed method that includes a series of requirements. Each municipality and school district each have their own set of needs and abilities. Therefore, any standards from SDE should be in the form of best practices and guidance to allow for the greatest amount of flexibility for school districts to properly implement."

**Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, CT Association of Public School Superintendents**

"CAPSS would be pleased to support this bill so long as the expansion to grades K-8 is postponed until the research study is completed so as to guide program development."

**Chris Wilson, Executive Committee Member, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education**

"CABE is supportive of providing districts with a remote learning model with standards. We know the 9-12 standards have just been established and that the earlier grades may utilize some of those standards."

**Mary Yordon, Divisional Vice President PreK-12, AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO**

"We have serious reservations about remote instruction of students in the early grades where in-person instruction builds relationships that cannot be replicated online, and students engage in essential learning about community, belonging, citizenship, sharing and caring. These provide the foundation for learning in the higher grades where remote learning may be more effective once literacy skills are established."

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Kate Dias, President, CT Education Association**

"What have we learned? Students learn best in the classroom with a teacher providing ongoing encouragement and helping them when they start to fall behind. Where remote learning has worked for students, there have been several constants: high-level maturity of the learner, home support network, connection to local school district, and access to adult academic supports. And we have also learned that no one has proven remote learning to be successful with our youngest learners. Expanding remote learning from ninth grade all the way down to kindergarten, when we have not even established it as desirable or feasible, could have serious unintended consequences "

**Andrew A. Feinstein, Legislative Chair, Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut**

"SEEK opposes H.B. 5287. We have closely reviewed the newly proposed Connecticut Standards for Remote Learning Grades 9 to 12, released by the State Department of Education last week. And, we have met with CSDE officials. They have done a herculean job in writing guidance, but the big questions remain. Frankly, we do not think a generalized program of remote learning is ready for prime time. We would prefer the implementation of the standards in, perhaps, 10 settings, with various levels of coverage to work out the numerous problems created before allowing all districts to utilize remote learning as they see fit and to prepare for a state-wide school. We are particularly concerned about how remote learning will impact students with disabilities. We are concerned about increased segregation and the creating of learning options not available to students with disabilities. H.B. 5287 expedites the process of remote learning. We would prefer to slow down the process."

**Jan Hochadel, President, AFT CT**

"If we have learned anything from the struggles of the past two years, it is that remote and hybrid learning are not a substitute – educationally, socially, and psychologically – for in-person learning. We know from previous attempts at remote education in other states who saw it as a less expensive option to inperson learning that the retention of skills simply does not exist for most students who learn remotely. We know now that the loss of in-person learning has a far greater impact on young people than we had suspected. Raised Bill 5287 ignores all this evidence. Connecticut has been an educational leader for states throughout this country for decades. We have been successful for our commitment to our students and our educators. Raised Bill 5287 threatens to undo all we have built. I strongly urge you to reject this bill."

*\*The Education Committee received additional testimony regarding this bill, which is posted on the CGA website.*

**Reported by: Madison Chain**

**Date: 3/16/2022**