
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 231

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER.

SUMMARY

By law, the purpose of the State Education Resource Center (SERC), a quasi-public agency, is to help the State Board of Education provide programs and activities that promote educational equity and excellence. The bill makes the following changes in the education statutes relating to SERC:

1. expands SERC's specific list of required programs and activities;
2. removes the requirement that SERC's real estate leases be subject to Department of Administrative Services' approval, review, or regulation;
3. requires, rather than allows, the education commissioner to allocate funds to SERC, including operational funds; and
4. earmarks the first \$500,000 of lapsed Open Choice program funding for SERC to use for professional development for teachers in districts that receive Open Choice students.

The bill also makes various technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022

§ 1 — SERC PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to specific programs and activities in current law, the bill requires SERC to support local education agencies (public school districts) serving families', communities', and service providers' needs. Also, the bill requires, rather than allows, SERC to support programs and activities for early childhood education, school performance improvement, and opportunity gap closure. Lastly, it requires SERC to

support and collaborate with other state agencies when performing any of the programs and activities listed in current law or the bill.

§ 1 — DAS APPROVAL OF REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS

The bill removes SERC leases from DAS oversight but maintains the requirement that their terms be necessary or incidental to SERC and its board of directors carrying out their duties under state law. Under current law, the following SERC real estate transactions are subject to DAS approval, review, or regulations: investments, acquisitions, leases, purchases, ownership, management, holding, disposal, conveyances, deals, or agreements.

§ 2 — FUND ALLOCATION TO SERC

Current law allows the education commissioner to allocate funds to SERC so that it may provide professional development services, technical assistance and evaluation activities, policy analysis, and other forms of assistance to the following entities: (1) local and regional boards of education, (2) the State Department of Education, (3) state and local charter schools, (4) the Technical Education and Career System, (5) school readiness program providers, and (6) other education entities and providers.

The bill makes the commissioner's fund allocation to SERC required rather than optional. Additionally, it broadens the allocation's purpose to include operating funds in general, specifying that the funds must be allocated in an amount sufficient for SERC to operate.

§ 3 — OPEN CHOICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Existing law specifies how the education commissioner must use excess funds from the Open Choice program (see BACKGROUND) in years when fewer students enroll than appropriated funds anticipated.

By March 1 each year, current law requires the commissioner to first use up to \$500,000 of these nonlapsing funds for Open Choice receiving districts to provide grants on a pro-rata basis for each student who is one of at least nine other students attending the same school. Instead, the bill repurposes these excess funds, requiring the commissioner to

pay them to SERC so the center may provide (1) professional development to certified employees of Open Choice receiving districts and (2) training for other school personnel in these districts.

BACKGROUND

Open Choice Program

This program aims to (1) improve academic achievement; (2) reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation; and (3) provide a choice of educational programs for public school students (CGS § 10-266aa).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference - APP
Yea 39 Nay 0 (03/25/2022)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 50 Nay 0 (04/07/2022)