

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6663

Title: AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE ENGLISH LEARNERS' BILL OF RIGHTS.

Vote Date: 3/10/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/22/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee
Governor Ned Lamont

Sen. Herron Gaston, 23rd Dist.
Rep. Hubert D. Delany, 144th Dist.
Rep. Antonio Felipe, 130th Dist.
Rep. Fred Gee, 126th Dist.
Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey, 133rd Dist.
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Rep. Corey P. Paris, 145th Dist.
Rep. Robyn A. Porter, 94th Dist.
Rep. Christopher Rosario, 128th Dist.
Rep. James Sanchez, 6th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill implements the Governor's recommendations pertaining to English language learner (ELL) students and parents or guardians who require translators in interactions with school staff. Despite ongoing state and local efforts to provide support and accommodations to the ELL community, there are still inequities and inadequate resources or information provided to students and families. To address this, this bill codifies a bill of rights for ELL students and families into state law.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language for this bill makes modifications to the right to translation services by adding options for interpreters via phone or through an online platform and for services provided by a website or application.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

State Department of Education (SDE), Commissioner, Charlene M. Russell-Tucker: supports the bill as an effort to increase equity in education. They recognize the need for better protections for the families of ELL students and state that this bill adequately meets that need. They also state that this bill goes a long way in building the systemic support ELL families need at the local level.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Hispanic Federation, Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement, Ingrid Alvarez: states that this bill provides ELL students who have fallen behind their peers. They add that by guaranteeing equal access to education to all families, the state can help populations of students most severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Staff Attorney, Maria Morelli-Wolfe: cites their experiences aiding non-English speaking families with their school districts. They state that when schools don't provide translation services or when they send home notes/documents written in English, these families are left inadequately informed about their child's education.

Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now, Ramon Garcia: explains the challenges that English learners face in the school system and the negative effects they have on the student performance and involvement. They state that there is an increasing demand for translators in public schools as more non-English speaking immigrants come to Connecticut.

Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now, Marisabel Huarca: supports this bill stating that the large population of ELL students and families should have the same accessibility to a good education and resources as students who speak English.

Make the Road CT, Helen Quinonez: supports this bill stating that it codifies existing state and federal practices. They emphasize the importance of assisting parents and students learning English through providing translators for better communication.

Make the Road CT, Wendy Cardenas: supports this bill citing struggles that they and their mother experienced while they were attending school. They state that families should not be responsible for providing English language education themselves.

New Haven Federation of Teacher, President, Leslie Blatteau: supports this bill stating that English Language Learners deserve to have their rights protected in the classroom. They emphasize the need for education to be fully funded and staffed to eliminate the extreme inequities.

Connecticut Education Association (CEA), Legislative Coordinator, Louis Rosado Burch: supports this bill stating that it helps to improve the educational experience for English Learner who are already set at a disadvantage in school. They suggest that there be ECS funding mandated to be spent on ELs. Additionally, they suggest reducing the 20 EL student minimum required for receiving funding from the Bilingual Education Grant.

[Special Education Equity for Kids of Connecticut, Legislative Chair, Andrew Feinstein:](#) expresses support for expanding eligibility for school readiness programs. They raise concern that expanding these services without additional funding and staffing will exacerbate current shortages.

[Educators for Excellence, Executive Director, Daniel Pearson:](#) **states that the** bill will have a considerable impact on improving communications between schools and parents of **English learners. They add** that the funding gaps between districts **must be additionally** addressed, as lower-income districts have a higher ELL population and inequities will continue to grow without addressing **these** gaps.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:

[Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Sr. Staff Associate for Government Relations, Sheila McKay:](#) Ms. McKay raises concern that the expanding the number of translators would be challenging. She states that there is a lack of certified translators to be provided for students who speak less common languages.

Reported by: Sam Gilberti & James Carroll

Date: 4/3/2023