

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6758

AN ACT CONCERNING STAFFING FOR CERTAIN ROLES AT THE

**Title:** DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

**Vote Date:** 3/10/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/1/2023

**File No.:** 277

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## SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

## REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the State Department of Education to fulfill special education evaluator and curriculum coordinator positions in the department. These roles would facilitate the implementation of existing statutes that require SDE to enforce special education law and develop curriculum in areas such as Holocaust and genocide education, Asian American and Pacific Islander studies, African American studies, Latino studies, and Native American Studies. Currently, SDE has many unfilled positions that are already funded and fall short of fully enforcing or implementing the above existing law. There is concern that, without these positions, inequities among parents of special education students will persist and students across the state will miss out on vital historical and cultural studies.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Connecticut Department of Education, Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker](#): states appreciation for the additional outlined positions that would address special education and curriculum development. The Commissioner notes, however, that the positions are not reflected in the Governor's budget.

## NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council, Co-Chair, Amy Lin Meyerson, Esq.](#): states that filling key curriculum coordinator positions at SDE are important for combating hate crimes in the state. She describes how education is key to curbing the hateful attitudes and biases that lead to these crimes.

**Special Education Equity for Kids of Connecticut (SEEK), Legislative Chair, Andrew Feinstein:** states that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires free and adequate education for all students with disabilities. He writes that this is currently not fully enforced due to staffing issues with the State Department of Education. He emphasizes the need for proper funding and staffing to carry out equitable education for those with disabilities.

**Avon High School, Social Studies Teacher, Stu Abrams:** states that educating children on antisemitism, racism and genocide is necessary to prevent historical atrocities from happening in the future. He writes that educating children on these topics instills a better sense of empathy and integrity.

**Holocaust Education Resource and Outreach (HERO) Center, Director, Kimberly Ballaro:** states that the major issues surrounding genocide education are a lack of adequate materials, standard curriculum, educator training, and knowledge of resources. She adds that having dedicated staff to facilitate filling these gaps and help implement the curricula outlined in the bill would help the state serve its students and schools better, as these topics are important to our society.

**ADL Connecticut, Board Chair, Suzanne Batchelor Pinkes:** states that better educating students through effectively implementing Holocaust and Genocide education can help to reverse the record number of violent incidents towards Jewish people the state

**Bloomfield Humanities Committee, Reverend David Roones:** states that the bill will assist in providing a curriculum focused on diversity and will educate the public of their historical background.

**Center for Children's Advocacy, Attorney, Kathryn Scheinberg Meyer:** states that the State Department of Education has been unable to fulfill their responsibility to provide adequate education and special education has been affected the most from the lack of accountability maintained through SDE.

**Worthington Hooker School, Teacher, Eden C. Stein, Ph.D:** states that many middle and high school level students are uneducated on the Holocaust and genocide. She writes that as a result some students make anti-Semitic or offensive remarks without being aware of them. She also writes that educating students on these topics, helps to reduce barriers between identity groups in the community.

**The Jewish Community Relations Council, Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford:** states that support for teachers in providing effective anti-hate and holocaust education is essential for teaching these topics across Connecticut.

**Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut, Executive Director, Michael Bloom:** states that a curriculum coordinator to help implement curriculum for Holocaust and Genocide, African American, Latino, AAPI and other essential studies is essential for teachers to be effective. He suggests the following: (1) have the curriculum coordinator work with organizations such as JFACT, the Anti-Defamation League, the Dodd Center at UConn,

etc.; (2) collect data on the implementation of these mandates; and (3) increase funding for teacher's professional development.

[The Anti-Defamation League, Regional Director, Stacey G. Sobel, Esq.](#): states the importance of providing K-12 children with Holocaust and genocide education and recognizes a need to provide educators with the proper resources to provide effective education.

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

[EdD, APRN, BC, Linda Dalessio](#): states that the bill is vague and does not specify the positions that will be filled, and who will fill them. She believes that increasing funding will not solve the issue at hand and these responsibilities should be taken up at a regional level with educators who have first-hand, current experience with their respective school system.

[Ms. Cheryl Marceau](#): states that the bill is vague and allows unspecified roles to be created. She also believes the bill lacks any fiscal information. Additionally, she believes that the state Department of Education should not be expanded.

**Reported by: James Carroll**

**Date: 3/14/2023**