

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6880

AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION

Title: STATUTES.

Vote Date: 3/24/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/15/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill makes several revisions to existing education statutes. To address certain concerns regarding transparency, it requires school districts to make all approved curriculum available for parents to view, requires school districts to post school meal information, and requires school boards to make meeting agendas and associated documents available for public inspection and posted online. Similarly, it requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to provide recommendations on certain topics in education and submit annual reports.

To address certain concerns regarding accessibility, this bill broadens access to adult education classes for all parents who are under 17 years old. It also requires SDE to update its plan for a statewide remote learning school to include eligibility for students who cannot attend school in-person for medical reasons.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language for this bill removes the requirement for school boards to post their curricula and associated materials online and replaces the language with requirements consistent with the existing federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA). Similarly, the substitute language removes the requirement for boards of education to post the nutritional value of school meals and replaces it with a requirement for boards to post school meal compliance with nutritional requirements under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The previously included section giving schools the option to serve whole milk was removed to maintain compliance with federal guidelines.

The substitute also removes previously included sections requiring SDE to study the fiscal impacts of school voucher programs and requiring school districts to increase the lunch period from 20 to 30 minutes for full-day students.

The language further adds new sections to require school boards to provide in-service training on emergency seizure response, requires SDE to collaborate with the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) to support grant recipients, makes various revisions regarding management and funding of the State Education Resource Center (SERC), and pushes out the date by when schools need to provide free menstrual products by one year.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[State Department of Education \(SDE\), Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker;](#)

expresses support for Section 1, stating that allowing parents to view instructional material helps them understand local curriculum. However, they raise concerns regarding the time-consuming nature of the practice. Additionally, they express opposition to Section 2, asserting that it is unnecessary, has a large fiscal impact, and does not comply with federal guidelines. They also highlight that the expanded eligibility requirements regarding a statewide remote learning school, outlined in Section 4, protect student confidential information. They assert that the proposed school voucher program study would be unnecessary*. Additionally, they express support for providing additional time for student lunch periods*. Finally, they state that the proposed parent and teacher advisory committees are unnecessary, given the current involvement of the department in the legislature.

**The substitute language has removed the referenced provisions.*

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity \(CWCSEO\),](#)

[Children's Policy Analyst, Thomas Nuccio;](#) supports this bill stating that allowing parents to request enrollment in adult education and establishing a parent advisory group will help close the gap between parents, students, and educators. They additionally note that increased accessibility to educational materials will improve parent involvement in the educational process.

[Susan Bradford;](#) supports this bill stating that it takes steps towards improving transparency and communication by boards of education.

[Educator, Linda Dalessio;](#) submitted testimony in support of this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents \(CAPSS\), Executive](#)

[Director, Fran Rabinowitz;](#) opposes this bill raising concerns that increasing the time of school lunch periods would result in a loss of ten weeks of instruction for students over the thirteen year education processes*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

[School Nutrition Association of Connecticut \(SNACT\), President, Erin Perpetua;](#)

opposes this bill emphasizing the burden that the requirement to post nutritional information

would have on schools*. They also state that all school meals already meet the state and federal guidelines*. Additionally, they note that posted information may not always reflect what is served, which could put students with allergies at risk*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

School Nutrition Association of CT (SNACT), Co-Chair of Public Policy & Legislation Committee, Jeff Sidewater; opposes this bill stating that requiring the posting of nutritional information would be challenging for districts who operate their own food services*. They also note that many of those schools do not have the necessary staff and nutritional software to provide this nutritional information*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

Cheshire Public Schools, Superintendent, Jeffrey Solan; opposes this bill expressing concerns that requiring the posting instructional materials would cause copyright issues and limit the ability for schools to meet the student needs*. Additionally, they raise concerns regarding providing remote learning due to the negative mental health impacts seen during the pandemic. They also state opposition to increasing student lunch periods, as it will likely cause additional disciplinary issues*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

East Hampton Public Schools, Nutrition Services Director, Jennifer Bove; opposes this bill stating the requirement to post nutritional information for all cafeteria items would be hugely burdensome for school boards and food service directors*. They also assert that all school meals already meet the federal guidelines and that this provision would result in schools serving more processed food items*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:

Connecticut General Assembly (CGA), House Minority Leader, Vincent Candelora; expressed support for the provisions requiring school boards to post curriculum online for transparency and increasing parent involvement*. Additionally, they express support for the provisions allowing for virtual schooling, as outlined in Section 4, stating that it will ensure that all students' education needs are met.

**The substitute language for this bill has removed the referenced provisions.*

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), East Hartford Board of Education Chairman, Tyron Harris; suggested increasing flexibility for teachers regarding curriculum determinations and allowing parents to speak on agenda items during meetings. They also raise concerns that requiring the posting of school meal nutritional information would be challenging for districts, who offer diverse and ever changing choices to students*. They also express opposition to studying school vouchers* and mandating 30 minutes for student lunch periods*. They assert that the latter would create schedule disruptions, potentially lengthening the school day*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

Connecticut Education Association (CEA), President, Kate Dias; expresses opposition to the provision requiring school boards to post curriculum online, stating that it would be resource and time consuming*. They also express opposition to Section 4, noting to the

negative impacts of remote learning, the lack of support systems that can be provided remotely, and the high cost of implementation. They also raise concerns that the removal of real estate provisions outlined in Section 9 would promote segregation, reduce public school funding, subsidize the wealthy, and reduce transparency. Finally, they express support for the school meal nutritional posting in Section 2 to improve student health. They also state their support for the implementation of parent and teacher advisory committees outlined in Section 6, noting that it ensures that these important voices are promoted in SDE decisions.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

School and State Finance Project, Executive Director, Lisa Hammersley; raises concerns that the proposed school voucher program to be examined by SDE would divert ECS funding to private education. They highlight the lack of regulations and accountability in place for private schools.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

Pearson Virtual Schools (PVS), Policy Support Specialist, Jennifer Clarke; raises concerns that requiring publication of curriculum online could result in copyright and piracy of content issues*. They note that in virtual school settings, parents have access to recorded lessons which eliminates the need for posted curriculum*. Additionally, they recommend expanding virtual education eligibility for students, which they express is a less expensive option that can help students balance work or family commitments.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

Derby Public Schools, Superintendent, Matthew Conway; expresses concerns that mandating a 30 minute lunch period for students would reduce instructional time*. Additionally, they state that local and regional boards of education are best suited to address issues relating to scheduling*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

Branford Representative Town Meeting, Minority Leader, Tracy Everson; expresses support for the specific language requiring school boards to post curriculum related materials online to increase transparency*.

**The substitute language for this bill has removed the referenced provisions.*

Connecticut Republican Assembly, President, Anne Manusky; recommends changes to the language in Section 1 to improve transparency. They also suggest that the implemented parent and teacher advisory committees in Section 6 provide recommendations regarding Common Core, critical race theory, social-emotion learning, and comprehensive sexuality education.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

Connecticut Resident, Fairfield, Jennifer Jacobsen; suggests clarifying which curriculum materials are required to be posted pursuant to Section 1*. They also raise concerns that the proposed school voucher program study should not be limited to studying fiscal impact*. Finally, they express concerns that lengthening student lunch periods would limit hours of learning*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

[Connecticut Resident, Cheshire, Faith Ham](#); expresses support for the proposed school voucher program study that is outlined in Section 6, stating that it could enable children in struggling school districts to seek better education opportunities*.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

Reported by: James Carroll

Date: 3/30/2023