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## **ACTS AFFECTING REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTERS**

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You asked for a summary of the bills passed by the Education Committee that affect regional educational service centers (RESCs).

### **HB 6826 – AN ACT CONCERNING INTERDISTRICT PROGRAMS**

#### ***Transporting Students to Charter Schools Outside District***

Under the bill, the State Department of Education (SDE) must, within available appropriations, reimburse districts, RESCs, or cooperative arrangements that transport students to state charter schools outside their districts for the reasonable cost of the transportation, up to a maximum of \$1,200 per student. Under current law, districts, RESCs, and cooperative arrangements are eligible for a state transportation reimbursement grant of between zero and 60% of this cost, depending on the town's wealth.

Districts, RESCs, and cooperative arrangements must apply for grants to the education commissioner and document their costs. Half of the grant must be paid in October and the balance in May.

The bill requires each district, RESC, and cooperative arrangement that participates in the grant program to submit an expenditure statement by September 1 of the year after it receives a grant. The commissioner must adjust grants for the following year to account for any under or overpayment based on the statement.

The bill allows SDE to retain up to 1% of the charter school appropriation for administration and program evaluation.

### ***Open Choice Program***

***Enrollment Restrictions for Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London, and Windham.*** The bill restricts student participation in the state's interdistrict public school choice program in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London, and Windham starting in the 2001-02 school year. Under the bill, the percentage of white students from these districts who leave to attend school in other districts as part of the program cannot be greater than the percentage of white students enrolled in public schools in these districts in the preceding school year. The bill requires the RESCs operating the choice programs for the districts to comply with the restrictions in making program participation decisions and in administering any lottery when demand exceeds the number of spaces available.

***Participation by Other Priority Districts.*** The bill allows certain priority school districts to choose whether to participate in the open choice program, starting with the 2003-04 school year, rather than requiring participation for all priority districts. And it makes the program in the districts that choose to participate an "in-only" transfer. That is, students from outside those districts can transfer in but students from those districts cannot leave. It also limits the students who may transfer into those priority districts to those who bring racial, ethnic, and economic diversity to the district and do not increase isolation there.

Under current law, the program is required to operate in New Britain and Waterbury starting in the 2000-01 school year and in the remaining priority districts starting in the 2001-02 school year. The bill makes the program a voluntary, "in-only" program in all other priority districts.

The bill allows SDE to provide planning grants in FY 2002-03 to help RESCs plan to operate the program in the priority districts that choose to participate.

***RESC Program Operating Grants.*** The bill eliminates the annual flat grants to RESCs operating the choice program and instead requires the grants to fluctuate according to the number of participating students. Under current law each RESC receives \$175,000 per year to help school districts administer the choice program and provide student support and parent liaisons. Under the bill, RESCs receive a minimum grant of \$50,000 plus an allotment for each student. The per-pupil allotment

must be determined by subtracting the \$50,000 fixed grants for eligible RESCs from the total appropriation for RESCs under the program and dividing the remainder by the total number of participating students as of October 1 of the preceding school year.

***Projections of Spaces Available.*** By law, RESCs operating the choice programs must annually determine the number of spaces available for out-of-district students in districts where student participation is feasible, in terms of transportation. Districts must report their spaces available to the RESCs by March 31<sup>st</sup> annually. The bill allows the education commissioner to require districts in the Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven regions to report additional long-term space availability projections to ensure program demand is met.

## **SB 1201 – AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATORS**

### ***Criminal History Records Checks***

This bill requires public school employees to submit to state and national criminal history records checks within 14 rather than 90 days after being hired. It also expands the types of people who must submit to checks to include contractor's employees and workers placed in a school under a public assistance employment program, if they will have direct contact with students.

Each local school board or RESC must send to SBE the results of state criminal history checks on people holding SBE credentials.

The bill also requires local school boards and RESCs to arrange for methods of positive identification required by State Police Bureau of Identification (SPBI) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) other than the fingerprinting. They must send the fingerprints or other positive identification to the SPBI for the state criminal history records check. The SPBI must submit either the other identifying information or fingerprints to the FBI, as appropriate, for the national check.

The bill requires RESCs, if requested by a local board, to conduct methods of positive identification other than fingerprinting. The RESC must then forward the information for state and national criminal history records checks.

The bill exempts students employed by the school district where they attend school from the criminal history records checks.

The bill requires SBE to periodically submit to the SPBI a database of all applicants for an initial certificate, authorization, or permit as a teacher, school business administrator, occupational instructor, or coach along with a database of all people holding a certificate, authorization, or permit. The SPBI must check the state criminal history records against the database and notify SBE of any person with a criminal conviction. The bill prohibits SBE from issuing a certificate, authorization, or permit until it receives and evaluates the results of the check, and allows it to deny an application or revoke a credential if the person has been convicted of a crime of moral turpitude or another crime that would impair the standing of SBE's credentials.

## **HB 6810 – AN ACT CONCERNING ADULT EDUCATION**

### ***Adult Education Grants***

This bill allows eligible boards of education and RESCs to receive adult education grants for programs operated with cooperating eligible entities (other eligible boards or RESCs). The grant will equal the amount that the cooperating eligible entity received from private sources multiplied by the "cooperating eligible entity match ratio," so long as the amount is less than 20% of the amount of the entity's adult education grant from the previous fiscal year. The bill defines the "cooperating eligible entity match ratio" as the percentage of the board of education or RESC's eligible costs for operating an adult education with a cooperating eligible entity divided by one minus the eligible percentage.

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