

Senate, April 16, 1998. The Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding reported through SEN. LOONEY, 11th DIST., Chairman of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING DISPARITY REDUCTION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (a) As used in this section:

2 (1) "Priority school district" means a school
3 district described in section 10-266p, of the
4 general statutes, as amended;

5 (2) "Priority school" means a school in which
6 forty per cent or more of the lunches served are
7 served to students who are eligible for free or
8 reduced price lunches pursuant to federal law and
9 regulations, excluding such a school located in a
10 priority school district; and

11 (3) "Computers for classroom use" means
12 computers, including peripheral equipment, which
13 have a useful life of at least five years and are
14 consistent with a local technology plan and
15 curriculum and the Department of Education's
16 minimum standards.

17 (b) The Commissioner of Education shall
18 establish, within available bond authorizations, a
19 grant program to assist priority school districts
20 and school districts in which priority schools are
21 located to purchase computers for classroom use.

22 (c) Eighty-five per cent of the funds

23 available for purposes of this section shall be
24 used for grants to the priority school districts.

25 (d) Fourteen per cent of the funds available
26 for purposes of this section shall be used for
27 competitive grants to school districts in which
28 priority schools are located. Such grants shall be
29 in amounts to be determined by the commissioner
30 and shall be awarded based on demonstrated
31 resource needs, wealth and economic needs. Funds
32 received pursuant to this subsection shall be used
33 at the priority school.

34 (e) Eligibility for grants pursuant to this
35 section shall be determined for a five-year period
36 based on a school district's designation in the
37 initial year of application as a priority school
38 district or as a school district in which a
39 priority school is located. Grant awards shall be
40 made annually contingent upon the filing of an
41 application and a satisfactory annual evaluation.

42 (f) The Department of Education may retain up
43 to one per cent of the amount of funds
44 appropriated for purposes of this section for
45 coordination, program evaluation and
46 administration.

47 (g) No funds received by a school district
48 pursuant to this section shall be used to supplant
49 federal, state or local funding received by such
50 town for educational technology.

51 (h) School districts shall apply for grants
52 pursuant to this section at such times and in such
53 manner as the commissioner prescribes. Expenditure
54 reports shall be filed with the Department of
55 Education as requested by the commissioner. School
56 districts shall refund (1) any unexpended amounts
57 at the close of the project for which the grants
58 are awarded and (2) any amounts not expended in
59 accordance with the approved grant application.

60 Sec. 2. (NEW) Applications for school
61 building projects, other than those for the
62 construction of new buildings or pursuant to
63 subsection (b) of section 10-283 of the general
64 statutes, as amended, which are filed on or after
65 July 1, 1998, and prior to July 1, 2003, shall be
66 eligible for reimbursement at a rate that is ten
67 percentage points higher than the rate determined
68 pursuant to sections 10-285a or 10-285b of the
69 general statutes, as amended. Applications for
70 school building projects pursuant to subsection

71 (b) of said section 10-283 filed on or after July
72 1, 1999, and prior to July 1, 2003, shall be
73 eligible for such higher reimbursement rate. No
74 project for which an application is submitted
75 prior to the dates on which the eligibility for
76 higher reimbursement begins shall be eligible for
77 such higher reimbursement.

78 Sec. 3. Section 10-4h of the general statutes
79 is repealed and the following is substituted in
80 lieu thereof:

81 (a) The state Department of Education, in
82 consultation with the committee established
83 pursuant to section 10-4e, AS AMENDED, shall
84 establish a [competitive] grant program, within
85 the limit of the bond authorization for purposes
86 of this section, to assist (1) local and regional
87 school districts, (2) regional educational service
88 centers, [and] (3) cooperative arrangements among
89 [one] TWO or more boards of education, (4) STATE
90 CHARTER SCHOOLS, AS DEFINED IN SECTION 10-66aa,
91 AND (5) ENDOWED ACADEMIES APPROVED PURSUANT TO
92 SECTION 10-34 THAT ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SCHOOL
93 BUILDING PROJECT GRANTS PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 173,
94 to upgrade or install wiring, cable or other
95 distribution systems, INTERACTIVE LEARNING
96 HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE, and infrastructure
97 improvements to support telecommunications and
98 other information transmission equipment to be
99 used for educational purposes, PROVIDED A LOCAL OR
100 REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MAY USE A PORTION OF A
101 GRANT PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION FOR SUCH
102 IMPROVEMENTS TO A PUBLIC LIBRARY.

103 (b) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (c) OF
104 THIS SECTION, EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT, EACH REGIONAL
105 EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER, EACH COOPERATIVE
106 ARRANGEMENT, EACH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL AND EACH
107 ENDOWED ACADEMY SHALL BE ELIGIBLE, ANNUALLY, TO
108 RECEIVE A GRANT PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION BASED ON
109 A PERCENTAGE OF THE ELIGIBLE COSTS OF SUCH
110 IMPROVEMENTS AS FOLLOWS:

111 (1) THE PERCENTAGE OF THE ELIGIBLE COSTS A
112 LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIVES SHALL BE DETERMINED
113 AS FOLLOWS: (A) EACH TOWN SHALL BE RANKED IN
114 DESCENDING ORDER FROM ONE TO ONE HUNDRED
115 SIXTY-NINE ACCORDING TO SUCH TOWN'S ADJUSTED
116 EQUALIZED NET GRAND LIST PER CAPITA, AS DEFINED IN
117 SUBDIVISION (5) OF SECTION 10-261; AND (B) BASED
118 UPON SUCH RANKING, A PERCENTAGE OF NOT LESS THAN

119 TWENTY NOR MORE THAN EIGHTY SHALL BE DETERMINED
120 FOR EACH TOWN ON A CONTINUOUS SCALE;

121 (2) THE PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE COSTS A
122 REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIVES SHALL BE
123 DETERMINED BY ITS RANKING. SUCH RANKING SHALL BE
124 DETERMINED BY: (A) MULTIPLYING THE TOTAL
125 POPULATION, AS DEFINED IN SUBDIVISION (7) OF
126 SECTION 10-261, OF EACH TOWN IN THE DISTRICT BY
127 SUCH TOWN'S RANKING AS DETERMINED IN SUBDIVISION
128 (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION; (B) ADDING THE PRODUCTS
129 FOR EACH TOWN DETERMINED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (A) OF
130 THIS SUBDIVISION; AND (C) DIVIDING THE SUM
131 COMPUTED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (B) OF THIS
132 SUBDIVISION BY THE TOTAL POPULATION OF ALL TOWNS
133 IN THE DISTRICT. THE RANKING OF EACH REGIONAL
134 SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL BE ROUNDED TO THE NEXT
135 HIGHER WHOLE NUMBER AND EACH SUCH SCHOOL DISTRICT
136 SHALL RECEIVE THE SAME PERCENTAGE AS WOULD A TOWN
137 WITH THE SAME RANK;

138 (3) THE PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE COSTS A
139 REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER OR COOPERATIVE
140 ARRANGEMENT RECEIVES SHALL BE DETERMINED BY ITS
141 RANKING. SUCH RANKING SHALL BE DETERMINED BY: (A)
142 MULTIPLYING THE TOTAL POPULATION, AS DEFINED IN
143 SUBDIVISION (7) OF SECTION 10-261, OF EACH MEMBER
144 TOWN IN THE REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER OR
145 EACH TOWN IN THE COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT BY SUCH
146 TOWN'S RANKING, AS DETERMINED IN SUBDIVISION (1)
147 OF THIS SUBSECTION; (B) ADDING THE PRODUCTS FOR
148 EACH TOWN DETERMINED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (A) OF
149 THIS SUBDIVISION; AND (C) DIVIDING THE SUM
150 COMPUTED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (B) OF THIS
151 SUBDIVISION BY THE TOTAL POPULATION OF ALL TOWNS
152 IN THE REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER OR
153 COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT. THE RANKING OF EACH
154 REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER AND
155 COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT SHALL BE ROUNDED TO THE
156 NEXT HIGHER WHOLE NUMBER AND EACH SUCH CENTER OR
157 ARRANGEMENT SHALL RECEIVE THE SAME PERCENTAGE AS
158 WOULD A TOWN WITH THE SAME RANK;

159 (4) EACH STATE CHARTER SCHOOL SHALL BE
160 ELIGIBLE FOR EIGHTY PER CENT OF ITS ELIGIBLE
161 COSTS; AND

162 (5) THE PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE COSTS AN
163 ENDOWED ACADEMY RECEIVES SHALL BE DETERMINED BY
164 ITS RANKING. SUCH RANKING SHALL BE DETERMINED BY:
165 (A) MULTIPLYING THE TOTAL POPULATION, AS DEFINED
166 IN SUBDIVISION (7) OF SECTION 10-261, OF EACH TOWN

167 WHICH AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION FOR SUCH GRANT
168 DESIGNATED SUCH SCHOOL AS THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR SUCH
169 TOWN FOR A PERIOD OF NOT LESS THAN FIVE YEARS FROM
170 THE DATE OF SUCH APPLICATION, BY SUCH TOWN'S
171 PERCENTILE RANKING PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION (1) OF
172 THIS SUBSECTION; (B) ADDING THE PRODUCTS FOR EACH
173 TOWN DETERMINED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (A) OF THIS
174 SUBDIVISION; AND (C) DIVIDING THE SUM COMPUTED
175 UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (B) OF THIS SUBDIVISION BY THE
176 TOTAL POPULATION OF ALL TOWNS WHICH DESIGNATE THE
177 SCHOOL AS THEIR HIGH SCHOOL UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (A)
178 OF THIS SUBDIVISION. THE RANKING DETERMINED
179 PURSUANT TO THIS SUBDIVISION SHALL BE ROUNDED TO
180 THE NEXT HIGHER WHOLE NUMBER AND EACH ACADEMY
181 SHALL RECEIVE THE SAME PERCENTAGE AS WOULD A TOWN
182 WITH THE SAME RANK.

183 (c) IF THE AMOUNT OF FUNDS APPROPRIATED FOR
184 PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION IS LESS THAN THE TOTAL
185 AMOUNT NEEDED FOR GRANTS PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION,
186 THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION MAY REDUCE THE AMOUNT
187 OF GRANTS PROPORTIONATELY.

188 [(b)] (d) Grant applications shall be
189 submitted annually to the Commissioner of
190 Education at such time and on such forms as the
191 commissioner prescribes. [In determining whether
192 to award a grant pursuant to this section and in
193 determining the amount of the grant, the
194 commissioner shall consider, but such
195 consideration shall not be limited to, the
196 following factors: (1) The nature, description and
197 systems design of the project; (2) the results of
198 an assessment demonstrating the need for such a
199 project in the community; (3) the degree of
200 planning to use educational technology equipment
201 and hardware, including the extent to which the
202 school buildings will be capable of being linked
203 to other schools, libraries, institutions of
204 higher education and information networks and
205 provision for the training of staff; (4) the
206 extent to which the applicant in the development
207 of a plan, consulted with individuals or
208 businesses which have expertise in technology and
209 information systems; (5) the relative wealth of
210 the applicant; (6) the number of school districts
211 included in the grant application; (7) the size of
212 the school building; and (8) the grades enrolled
213 in the school building.] THE COMMISSIONER SHALL
214 APPROVE SUCH APPLICATIONS BASED ON STANDARDS

215 DEVELOPED JOINTLY BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
216 AND THE COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO SECTION
217 10-4e, AS AMENDED.

218 [(c)] (e) If the commissioner finds that any
219 grant awarded pursuant to this section is being
220 used for purposes which are not in conformity with
221 the purposes of this section, the commissioner may
222 require repayment of the grant to the state.

223 [(d)] (f) Each grantee shall submit, at such
224 time and in such form as the commissioner
225 prescribes, such reports and financial statements
226 as are required by the department.

227 Sec. 4. Subsection (1) of section 10-145b of
228 the general statutes is repealed and the following
229 is substituted in lieu thereof:

230 (1) (1) For certified employees of local and
231 regional boards of education, except as provided
232 in this subdivision, each professional educator
233 certificate shall be valid for five years and
234 continued every five years thereafter upon the
235 successful completion of professional development
236 activities which shall consist of not less than
237 ninety hours of continuing education, as
238 determined by the local or regional board of
239 education in accordance with this section, during
240 each successive five-year period. SUCH CONTINUING
241 EDUCATION REQUIREMENT COMPLETED BY CERTIFIED
242 EMPLOYEES WITH ELEMENTARY OR MIDDLE GRADES
243 ENDORSEMENTS WHO HOLD A POSITION REQUIRING SUCH AN
244 ENDORSEMENT SHALL INCLUDE AT LEAST FIFTEEN HOURS
245 OF TRAINING IN THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN THE
246 CLASSROOM DURING EACH FIVE-YEAR PERIOD. Such
247 continuing education completed by (A) the
248 superintendent of schools and (B) employees
249 employed in positions requiring an intermediate
250 administrator or supervisory certificate, or the
251 equivalent thereof, and whose administrative or
252 supervisory duties equal at least fifty per cent
253 of the assigned time of such employee, shall
254 include at least fifteen hours of training in the
255 evaluation of teachers pursuant to section 10-151b
256 during each five-year period. During each
257 five-year period in which a professional educator
258 certificate is valid, a holder of such certificate
259 who has not completed the ninety hours of
260 continuing education required pursuant to this
261 subdivision, and who has not been employed while
262 holding such certificate by a local or regional

263 board of education for all or part of the
264 five-year period, shall, upon application, be
265 reissued such certificate for five years minus any
266 period of time such holder was employed while
267 holding such certificate by a local or regional
268 board of education, provided there shall be only
269 one such reissuance during each five-year period
270 in which such certificate is valid. A certified
271 employee of a local or regional board of education
272 who is a member of the General Assembly and who
273 has not completed the ninety hours of continuing
274 education required pursuant to this subdivision
275 for continuation of his certificate, upon
276 application, shall be reissued a professional
277 educator certificate for a period of time equal to
278 six months for each year he served in the General
279 Assembly during the previous five years.
280 Continuing education hours completed during the
281 previous five years shall be applied toward such
282 ninety-hour requirement which shall be completed
283 during the reissuance period in order for such
284 employee to be eligible to have his certificate
285 continued. The cost of the professional
286 development activities required under this
287 subsection for certified employees of local or
288 regional boards of education shall be shared by
289 the state and local or regional boards of
290 education, except for those activities identified
291 by the State Board of Education as the
292 responsibility of the certificate holder. Each
293 local and regional board of education shall make
294 available, annually, at no cost to its certified
295 employees not fewer than eighteen hours of
296 professional development activities for continuing
297 education credit. Such activities may be made
298 available by a board of education directly,
299 through a regional educational service center or
300 cooperative arrangement with another board of
301 education or through arrangements with any
302 continuing education provider approved by the
303 State Board of Education. Local and regional
304 boards of education shall grant continuing
305 education credit for professional development
306 activities which the certified employees of the
307 board of education are required to attend,
308 professional development activities offered in
309 accordance with the plan developed pursuant to
310 subsection (b) of section 10-220a, or professional

311 development activities which the board may approve
312 for any individual certified employee. Each board
313 of education shall determine the specific
314 professional development activities to be made
315 available with the advice and assistance of the
316 teachers employed by such board, including
317 representatives of the exclusive bargaining unit
318 for such teachers pursuant to section 10-153b. The
319 time and location for the provision of such
320 activities shall be in accordance with either an
321 agreement between the board of education and the
322 exclusive bargaining unit pursuant to said section
323 10-153b or, in the absence of such agreement or to
324 the extent such agreement does not provide for the
325 time and location of all such activities, in
326 accordance with a determination by the board of
327 education.

328 (2) Each local and regional board of
329 education shall attest to the state Department of
330 Education, in such form and at such time as the
331 commissioner shall prescribe, that professional
332 development activities for which continuing
333 education credit is granted by the board: (A) Are
334 planned in response to identified needs, (B) are
335 provided by qualified instructional personnel, as
336 appropriate, (C) have the requirements for
337 participation in the activity shared with
338 participants before the commencement of the
339 activity, (D) are evaluated in terms of its
340 effectiveness and its contribution to the
341 attainment of school or district-wide goals and
342 (E) are documented in accordance with procedures
343 established by the State Board of Education. At
344 the end of each five-year period each professional
345 educator shall attest to the state Department of
346 Education, in such form and at such time as the
347 commissioner shall prescribe, that the
348 professional educator has successfully completed
349 ninety hours of continuing education.

350 (3) In the event that the state Department of
351 Education notifies the local or regional board of
352 education that the provisions of subdivision (2)
353 of this subsection have not been met and that
354 specific corrective action is necessary, the local
355 or regional board of education shall take such
356 corrective action immediately. The department
357 shall not invalidate continuing education credit
358 awarded prior to such notice.

359 Sec. 5. Subsection (c) of section 10-220 of
360 the general statutes, as amended by section 21 of
361 public act 97-290, is repealed and the following
362 is substituted in lieu thereof:

363 (c) [By November 1, 1994, and annually
364 thereafter] ANNUALLY, each local and regional
365 board of education shall submit to the
366 Commissioner of Education a strategic school
367 profile report for each school under its
368 jurisdiction and for the school district as a
369 whole. The superintendent of each local and
370 regional school district shall present the profile
371 report at the next regularly scheduled public
372 meeting of the board of education after each such
373 November first. The profile report shall provide
374 information on measures of (1) student needs, (2)
375 school resources, INCLUDING TECHNOLOGICAL
376 RESOURCES AND UTILIZATION OF SUCH RESOURCES AND
377 INFRASTRUCTURE, (3) student and school
378 performance, (4) equitable allocation of resources
379 among its schools, and (5) reduction of racial,
380 ethnic and economic isolation.

381 Sec. 6. (a) For the purposes described in
382 subsection (b) of this section, the State Bond
383 Commission shall have the power, from time to
384 time, to authorize the issuance of bonds of the
385 state in one or more series and in principal
386 amounts not exceeding in the aggregate nine
387 million seven hundred fifty thousand dollars.

388 (b) The proceeds of the sale of said bonds,
389 to the extent of the amount stated in subsection
390 (a) of this section, shall be used by the
391 Department of Education for purposes of the grant
392 program established pursuant to section 10-4h of
393 the general statutes, as amended by section 3 of
394 this act.

395 (c) All provisions of section 3-20 of the
396 general statutes, or the exercise of any right or
397 power granted thereby which are not inconsistent
398 with the provisions of this section are hereby
399 adopted and shall apply to all bonds authorized by
400 the State Bond Commission pursuant to this
401 section, and temporary notes in anticipation of
402 the money to be derived from the sale of any such
403 bonds so authorized may be issued in accordance
404 with said section 3-20 and from time to time
405 renewed. Such bonds shall mature at such time or
406 times not exceeding twenty years from their

407 respective dates as may be provided in or pursuant
408 to the resolution or resolutions of the State Bond
409 Commission authorizing such bonds. None of said
410 bonds shall be authorized except upon a finding by
411 the State Bond Commission that there has been
412 filed with it a request for such authorization,
413 which is signed by or on behalf of the Secretary
414 of the Office of Policy and Management and states
415 such terms and conditions as said commission, in
416 its discretion, may require. Said bonds issued
417 pursuant to this section shall be general
418 obligations of the state and the full faith and
419 credit of the state of Connecticut are pledged for
420 the payment of the principal of and interest on
421 said bonds as the same become due, and accordingly
422 and as part of the contract of the state with the
423 holders of said bonds, appropriation of all
424 amounts necessary for punctual payment of such
425 principal and interest is hereby made, and the
426 State Treasurer shall pay such principal and
427 interest as the same become due.

428 Sec. 7. (NEW) The Department of Education
429 shall provide, annually, within available funding,
430 competitive grants for the establishment of
431 rural-urban distance learning partnerships. The
432 partnerships shall be established between two or
433 more school districts and shall serve as models
434 for other school districts to use to improve their
435 use of educational technology. Local and regional
436 boards of education and regional educational
437 service centers may apply, annually, for such
438 grants at such time and on such forms as the
439 Commissioner of Education prescribes. In
440 determining whether to award a grant, the
441 commissioner shall consider, but such
442 consideration need not be limited to: (1) The
443 number of school districts involved; (2) whether
444 both urban and rural school districts are
445 participating; and (3) the effect of the
446 partnership on the reduction of racial, ethnic and
447 economic isolation.

448 Sec. 8. (a) For the purposes described in
449 subsection (b) of this section, the State Bond
450 Commission shall have the power, from time to
451 time, to authorize the issuance of bonds of the
452 state in one or more series and in principal
453 amounts not exceeding in the aggregate five
454 hundred thousand dollars, provided two hundred

455 fifty thousand dollars of said authorization shall
456 be effective July 1, 1998, and two hundred fifty
457 thousand dollars of said authorization shall be
458 effective July 1, 1999.

459 (b) The proceeds of the sale of said bonds,
460 to the extent of the amount stated in subsection
461 (a) of this section, shall be used by the
462 Department of Education for the purpose of grants
463 of not more than fifty thousand dollars each for
464 five rural-urban distance learning partnerships
465 pursuant to section 7 of this act.

466 (c) All provisions of section 3-20 of the
467 general statutes, or the exercise of any right or
468 power granted thereby which are not inconsistent
469 with the provisions of this section are hereby
470 adopted and shall apply to all bonds authorized by
471 the State Bond Commission pursuant to this
472 section, and temporary notes in anticipation of
473 the money to be derived from the sale of any such
474 bonds so authorized may be issued in accordance
475 with said section 3-20 and from time to time
476 renewed. Such bonds shall mature at such time or
477 times not exceeding twenty years from their
478 respective dates as may be provided in or pursuant
479 to the resolution or resolutions of the State Bond
480 Commission authorizing such bonds. None of said
481 bonds shall be authorized except upon a finding by
482 the State Bond Commission that there has been
483 filed with it a request for such authorization,
484 which is signed by or on behalf of the Secretary
485 of the Office of Policy and Management and states
486 such terms and conditions as said commission, in
487 its discretion, may require. Said bonds issued
488 pursuant to this section shall be general
489 obligations of the state and the full faith and
490 credit of the state of Connecticut are pledged for
491 the payment of the principal of and interest on
492 said bonds as the same become due, and accordingly
493 and as part of the contract of the state with the
494 holders of said bonds, appropriation of all
495 amounts necessary for punctual payment of such
496 principal and interest is hereby made, and the
497 State Treasurer shall pay such principal and
498 interest as the same become due.

499 Sec. 9. The Commissioner of Education shall
500 report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the
501 general statutes, to the joint standing committee
502 of the General Assembly having cognizance of

503 matters relating to education on improvements in
504 the use of technology in schools by January 1,
505 2000. The report shall include: (1) An analysis of
506 the effect of the program established pursuant to
507 section 10-4h of the general statutes, as amended
508 by section 3 of this act, and the rural-urban
509 distance learning partnerships pursuant to section
510 7 of this act on the reduction of racial, ethnic
511 and economic isolation; and (2) information on the
512 coordination of the use of state and federal funds
513 received for purposes of technology.

514 Sec. 10. This act shall take effect July 1,
515 1998.

516 STATEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONERS: In
517 subdivision (2) of section 1, the phrase "lunches
518 served are served to" was added for accuracy.

519 ED COMMITTEE VOTE: YEA 31 NAY 0 JFS C/R FIN
520 FIN COMMITTEE VOTE: YEA 45 NAY 0 JFS-LCO

* * * * *

"THE FOLLOWING FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND BILL ANALYSIS ARE PREPARED FOR THE BENEFIT OF MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SOLELY FOR PURPOSES OF INFORMATION, SUMMARIZATION AND EXPLANATION AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OR EITHER HOUSE THEREOF FOR ANY PURPOSE."

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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT - BILL NUMBER sSB 59

.....L.....J.....M.....

STATE IMPACT	Significant Cost, see explanation below
MUNICIPAL IMPACT	Significant Revenue Gain, see explanation below
STATE AGENCY(S)	Department of Education

EXPLANATION OF ESTIMATES:

STATE AND MUNICIPAL IMPACT:

Section 1 establishes a program to help priority school districts and districts with priority schools buy computers and peripheral equipment for classroom use. No funding has been authorized by the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee for this purpose.

Section 2 increases the school construction sliding scale reimbursement scale from 20%-80% to 30%-90% for the period 1998-2003 for projects other than new buildings. This section will result in a significant state cost in bond funds and debt service. This would be a revenue gain to local and regional school districts. The cost could exceed \$200 million over the five-year period.

Section 6 funds the annual grants described in Section 3 with a bond authorization of \$9.75 million. Funding for this purpose has not been included in the bond packages passed by the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. The principal and interest cost of bonding \$9.75 million for 20 years at an annual interest rate of 6.25% is \$16.1 million.

Section 8 funds the rural-urban distance learning partnerships described in Section 7 with a bond authorization of \$250,000 in FY 1998-99 and \$250,000 in FY 1999-2000. Funding for this purpose has not been included in the bond packages passed by the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. The principal and interest cost of bonding \$0.5 million for 20 years at an annual interest rate of 6.25% is \$0.83 million.

All other sections of the bill (4, 5 and 9) have no fiscal impact as they only provide detail to existing requirements or can be carried out with existing resources.

* * * * *

OLR BILL ANALYSIS

sSB 59

AN ACT CONCERNING DISPARITY REDUCTION

SUMMARY: This bill establishes a grant program, administered by the education commissioner within available bond authorizations, to help priority school districts and districts with priority schools buy computers and peripheral equipment for classroom use. Computers purchased with state grants must have a useful life of at least five years, be consistent with a local technology plan and curriculum, and meet the State Department of Education's (SDE) minimum standards. The bill does not authorize any bonding to pay for the grants.

The bill institutes a temporary 10% increase in the state reimbursements for school renovation projects, increasing the reimbursement range for such projects from 20% to 80% to 30% to 90%. The higher reimbursement rate applies to (1) renovation projects for which a board of education applies between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 2003 and (2) projects to fix fire or catastrophic damage or code violations for which a board applies between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2003. Earlier applications and projects to build completely new schools are not eligible.

The bill also (1) makes state grants to school

districts, regional educational service centers, and cooperative arrangements to install and upgrade telecommunications infrastructure in schools an entitlement instead of a competitive grant; (2) extends grant eligibility to state charter schools and to endowed academies eligible for school construction grants; (3) allows grants to be used to purchase and install interactive learning hardware and software; and (4) allows districts to use part of their grants to upgrade telecommunications infrastructure at public libraries. It authorizes \$9.75 million in bonding to pay for these grants.

In addition, the bill:

1. requires elementary and middle school teachers to complete at least 15 hours of training every five years in how to use computers in the classroom;
2. requires the annual strategic school profiles that local school boards must submit to the state Board of Education to include information on technological resources and infrastructure and their use as part of the information on school resources;
3. requires SDE to provide competitive grants to establish distance learning partnerships between two or more urban and rural districts and authorizes \$500,000 in bonding for the grants over two years;
4. requires the education commissioner to report to the Education Committee by January 1, 2000 on improvements in schools' use of technology; and
5. removes obsolete language.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 1998

FURTHER EXPLANATION

Computer Grants

The bill allocates 85% of the funds for grants to priority districts, 14% for grants to districts with

priority schools, and up to 1% to the SDE for administration, coordination, and program evaluation. (Although the bill requires the computer grants to be funded from bond authorizations, it reserves 1% of the amount "appropriated" to SDE.) Priority school districts are the 14 districts that rank highest in population, in numbers of educationally or economically needy children, or both. Districts with priority schools are those that are not priority districts and that have one or more schools at which at least 40% of the school lunches are served to students eligible for free or reduced price lunches under federal law.

The commissioner must award priority school grants on a competitive basis, in amounts he determines, and based on demonstrated resource needs, wealth, and economic need. A district with a priority school that receives a grant must spend it at the priority school.

Once determined eligible as a priority district or a district with a priority school, a district remains so for five years. Grants are annual, are contingent on an application and a satisfactory evaluation, and may not be used to supplant other educational technology funds.

In applying for grants, districts must follow the education commissioner's procedure. They must file expenditure reports as he requests and must refund any unspent amounts at the end of the project and any amounts not spent in accordance with the approved application.

Telecommunication Infrastructure Grants

Under the bill, grant amounts are based on state reimbursement for eligible costs and are distributed in the same manner as school construction grants. Reimbursement percentages range from 20% to 80%, depending on wealth. Reimbursement percentages for local and regional school districts, regional educational service centers, and eligible endowed academies are calculated in the same way as for school construction projects. The bill specifies that state charter schools, which are not currently eligible for school construction grants, must be reimbursed for 80% of the costs of telecommunications infrastructure work.

If the state appropriation is not sufficient to fund all the grants called for in the bill, SDE must reduce each grant proportionally.

Under the bill, for an endowed academy to be eligible for a grant, at least half of its governing board, excluding the chairman, must represent the boards of education of the towns that designate them as their high schools. Currently, of the three endowed academies, Woodstock Academy and the Gilbert School meet this condition and Norwich Free Academy does not. In addition, the bill restricts eligibility to cooperative arrangements made up of two or more boards of education instead of one or more.

The bill also eliminates specific criteria for the education commissioner to use in awarding competitive grants and instead requires him to approve applications based on standards he develops together with the Joint Committee on Educational Technology.

The bond authorization for these grants is subject to regular state bonding procedures and requirements. Bond terms are up to 20 years.

Urban-Rural Distance Learning Partnership Grants

The bill authorizes a total of \$500,000 in bonding over two years (\$250,000 effective July 1, 1998 and \$250,000 on July 1, 1999) for five distance learning partnership grants of up to \$50,000 each. The bond terms can be up to 20 years and are subject to regular state bonding procedures and requirements.

The partnerships must serve as models for other districts to improve their use of educational technology. Local or regional boards of education and regional education service centers may apply for the grants, according to a process the education commissioner prescribes. In awarding grants, the commissioner must consider at least: (1) the number of districts involved; (2) whether both urban and rural districts are participating; and (3) how the partnership affects racial, ethnic, and economic isolation.

Commissioner's Report

The commissioner's report on school technology must include (1) effects of the telecommunications infrastructure and distance learning grants on racial, ethnic, and economic isolation and (2) information on how the use of federal and state technology funds is coordinated.

BACKGROUND

Joint Committee on Educational Technology

This committee assists the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors of Higher Education to coordinate and use technology effectively and efficiently for Connecticut students. It has a minimum of 23 members representing state agencies; school boards and teachers; and media, telecommunications, and computer companies and organizations.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference
Yea 31 Nay 0

Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee

Joint Favorable Report
Yea 45 Nay 0