

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6619

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A KINDERGARTEN TO
Title: EIGHT GRADE MODEL CURRICULUM.

Vote Date: 3/29/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/17/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires SDE and SERC to develop a K-8 model curriculum that may be used by boards of education by Jan. 1, 2023. This curriculum must include and integrate the following topics throughout all grade levels: Native American studies, Asian Pacific American studies, LGBTQ studies, climate change, personal financial management and financial literacy, military service and experience of American veterans and civics and citizenship, including digital citizenship and media literacy. SDE and SERC are allowed to use existing public and private materials and personnel and to accept gifts, grants, and donations when developing the model curriculum.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Acting Commissioner, State Department of Education:

SDE supports a standard K-8 model curriculum, but we cannot support this proposal as written. It takes more than 1.5 years to meaningfully accomplish the work for a single grade-level course, and this legislation requires multiple grades, subjects, and topics. The African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino mandated high school elective course of studies curriculum has taken more than 100 hours to draft and revise, SDE personnel continue to provide a minimum of least 10 hours a week to review each unit for alignment and consistency in lesson and assessment design. We would require a dedicated budget and several new staffing positions to effectuate the plan.

Denise Merrill, Secretary of the State of Connecticut:

Supports adding the civics education provisions from HB 6139 to the bill. Our children need to be set up for success in the most comprehensive ways possible. The very nature of developing and sustaining a social norm means that a shared or common experience across all schools is needed. While civic learning has been essential throughout American history, in this age of growing polarization, it should be considered an essential component of a 21st-century education. (These concerns were addressed in the substitute language)

Steven Hernández, Executive Director, CWCSEO:

The establishment of a K-8 curriculum will help bring awareness to the many underrepresented groups in the state of Connecticut while improving the educational experiences for our public-school students. In the spirit of "nothing for us without us" the Commission asks that any model curriculum developed as a result of this legislation include meaningful input from the communities represented by the model curriculum.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Sen. Cathy Osten, Connecticut Senate:

Darlene Kascak, Education Coordinator, IAISMRC:

Phyllip Thomas, Chairman, Pequot Tribal Youth Council:

Richard Velky, Chief, Schaghticoke Tribal Nation:

Crystal Whipple, Chairwoman, MPTN Tribal Education Committee

We perform a great disservice to ourselves and our children if we continue to choose to ignore Connecticut's First Peoples place in the history of what we now know as Connecticut. This disservice also extends to our continued use of mascots and team names that are offensive to Native Americans. There is so much more we can learn about the peoples and cultures that make up the great diversity in our state. Developing sound curriculum, from primary source materials, and including said curriculum in our public schools is long overdue.

Rep. Geoff Luxenburg, House Majority Caucus Chair:

As our society changes it is important that our state education system reflects those changes and ensures that we are providing our young people with all the tools necessary to succeed. Moreover, recent civil and political discourse has demonstrated that we need to be more intentional about teaching the nuances of certain subjects that have historically been overlooked or left out of school text books, such as the subjects included in this bill.

William A. Bevacqua, President, Connecticut Democracy Center:

Jonathan Weiner, Chair, Connecticut Bar Association Civics Education Committee

Recommends that a strong civics component be incorporated into that model curriculum. Given upcoming federal legislation, it is imperative to have a framework for civics as part of a comprehensive model curriculum that that will allow resources, state or federal, to be put to their best use.

John Board, Chair, New Britain Pride:

If Connecticut adopts this bill, we would be the fourth state to have an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum. This bill will empower local boards of education on how to implement and innovate regarding the curriculum. Additionally, our youth are woefully unprepared when they graduate high school when it comes to finances and personal financial management.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.:

The development of a model curriculum would reduce duplication of effort at the local level and provide a resource that boards of education could adopt or modify as appropriate.

Subira Gordon, Executive Director, ConnCAN: Establishing a model curriculum will set a clear baseline for what students could learn in a given year, provide much needed curricular support for capacity-limited districts so teachers can focus more on delivery than building their own content and ensure that curriculum includes culturally competent pedagogy and practice in order to increase understanding and engagement.

Ray Rossomando, Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations, CEA:

Recommends that the proposal include input by active educators. Educators are best poised to determine the scope and sequence of curriculum but asking each of CT's school districts to do it individually results in unnecessary duplication of effort. Developing a state-wide model curriculum would help school districts that wished to use it to avoid recreating the wheel while providing a framework for those who write curriculum locally to use it as a springboard to innovation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Rev. Abraham Hernandez, Executive Chapter Director, NHCLC CT:

We are opposed to the subject matter which seeks to introduce LGBTQ studies. This curriculum will promote unscientific "gender transition" theories which are harmful to still developing teens and set some on a path to using experimental chemical treatments and choosing elective surgical procedures to remove healthy body parts. There is evidence that these kinds of lessons are sexually exploitive in nature.

Reported by: Dallas Emerle

Date: 3/31/2021