

Education Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5283

AN ACT CONCERNING THE EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANT FORMULA
Title: AND THE FUNDING OF OTHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

Vote Date: 3/25/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/4/2022

File No.:

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REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill makes revisions to the equalization aid grants for fiscal years 2023 through 2030.

The bill also requires the Department of Education, no later than January 1, 2024, to calculate an estimated amount for the operation of each choice program including, agricultural science and technology centers and interdistrict magnet schools. Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Education, not later than January 1, 2024 to calculate the costs associated with operating a charter school.

Furthermore, the bill requires that each interdistrict magnet school operator be paid its total school program needs and allows an interdistrict that is not a local or regional board of education to charge tuition to a local or regional board of education for a sending town. Upon charging tuition to a local or regional board of education an interdistrict must notify the Department of Education of the charge, and the Department of Education must report to the General Assembly. The bill also prohibits any interdistrict magnet school operator that is a local or regional board of education from charging tuition to another local or regional board of education. Also, the bill prohibits a regional educational service center that assists the state in meeting the goals of the stipulation and order of Sheff v. O'Neill from charging tuition to a local or regional board of education. The bill also requires all interdistrict magnet schools to follow the same laws and regulations applicable to public schools. Also, the bill establishes a method of calculating and providing operating grants to interdistrict magnet school programs.

Also, the bill makes revisions to charter school funding

Lastly, the bill establishes a taskforce to study issues related to education funding to local and regional boards or education, charter schools, and interdistrict magnet schools.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker, CT State Dept. of Education:](#) “This bill is a modified version of SB 948 from the 2021 legislative session on which the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) conducted an independent analysis of the potential impact of the bill. Some of the changes made to the original bill will delay the rollout of the financial impact of approximately \$376 million demonstrated in OFA’s analysis, however, we have not had sufficient time to run multi-year financial projections. In the long term, the fiscal impact of this bill appears to be of

similar or greater magnitude to that of SB 948. In early January, the Department provided feedback on OFA's analysis some of which is still pertinent to Raised Bill #5283 and is provided below along with additional comments on the bill."

[Sarah Healy Eagan, Child Advocate, Office of the Child Advocate](#): "OCA strongly supports this bill which would commit the state to a more equitable education funding framework and provide fiscal stability for school districts. While federal stimulus funding has provided much needed relief to school districts, it has only temporarily reduced funding gaps. The one-time nature of these funds makes it difficult for school districts to invest them meaningfully for sustainable improvements on behalf of children. By committing to fully fund education at the expiration of the federal stimulus funding, school districts can begin to put dollars towards reoccurring expenses to help students now."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Heidi Alterman, Representative, Norwalk Common Council](#): "We are grateful that this bill recognizes the need to create a more equitable Connecticut, both racially and socio-economically, and will take steps to bring us closer to that reality. Though this bill alone will not completely close the racial funding gap, it does put our state on the right path by beginning the conversation. Thank you for your time today and I urge you to support this bill."

[Ernest Bailey, Organizer, Educators For Excellence - Connecticut \(E4E-CT\)](#): "I urge state leaders to fully fund education before the federal dollars run out so that the next generation can be prepared to handle the challenges of the future. It's time for us to close the opportunity gap and ensure that all students have the chance to succeed."

[Laurie Bajorek, President, Vernon Education Foundation \(VEF\)](#): "Every CT child deserves to graduate high school with the competencies that lend them to be productive, engaged citizens capable of accessing the multitude of job opportunities available within the state. Some children require more resources and accommodations to do so, but providing these is how we succeed and progress as a state. Because of CT's current funding formulas, our school districts with the greatest range of needs are trying to do more with less. Passage of H.B. 5283 would address the inequities and move us forward."

[Edward Belinsky, Program Director, Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology Center](#): "As director of one of Connecticut largest agriscience centers, I would like to express my gratitude for the legislators who participated in this bill and for supporting our often forgotten agricultural education programs in funding equality. I often consider agricultural education centers to be the first "Magnet" school programs in the state serving our communities since 1920. Our teaching model that includes hands-on, career-based learning strategies, work place experiences and leadership training through the FFA has been a model for others to follow."

[Jane L. Brawerman, Executive Director, Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District, Inc](#): "This bill will ensure the sustainability and growth of our regional agriscience programs by helping to guarantee sufficient funding in the future; by eliminating the requirement that the sending town provide tuition, removing the financial burden from the town and allowing increased enrollment; and by providing equal funding for agriscience and other choice school options in CT."

[Kathleen Callahan, Chair, National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter's Education and Legislative Action Network \(NASW/CT ELAN\)](#): "Education plays a pivotal role in an individual's economic and social mobility. Our students continue to recover from extraordinary, challenging times and it is our responsibility – as the adults supporting our students, our children – to support their learning opportunities. Equitable funding is essential for access to resources and improved outcomes. This bill would help realize the intent of equalization aid in education, leading to a more just and student-centered system which provides learning opportunities for all Connecticut public school students."

[Catherine M. Carbone, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, Bristol Public Schools](#): "H.B. 5382 provides an opportunity for the State to meet its obligations under the ECS formula and mitigate the impact of the fiscal cliff to Connecticut's highest-need districts. The ECS formula established in 2017 is scheduled to follow a 10-year phase-in. Six more years is too long to wait for the funding that Bristol's students need and deserve."

[Mackenzie Corkins, President, Housatonic Valley FFA Chapter](#): "Given the amazing opportunities I had as a student, I plan to pursue giving those back to generations to come as an Agricultural Education Teacher. I'll never be able to speak enough about this program. To know that these experiences and opportunities that could be given to future students who are looking for their place in this world just as I did, are being compromised, I feel it is my duty to advocate for its importance. The equitable funding for programs will continue to impact so many and continue providing opportunities to students across the State and even the Nation."

[Joe Corso, Principal, Lyman Hall High School](#): "The increased funding would allow us to provide more opportunities and resources for existing students to ensure they have access to industry and post-secondary expectations, similar to their peers in technical and magnet schools. When more students are allowed to attend, we can increase our reach to more students through additional staff and avail greater opportunities to everyone within our district to be engaged members of our program, school, and community. Please support this bill."

[Kathryn Dal Zin, Lyman Hall Regional Agriscience & Technology Education Center](#): "Equal opportunity cannot be accomplished given the current funding structure and so I ask you to support Bill #5283 so that students will have equal access to Ag Science programs across the state - Programs that will continue to provide unique opportunities and experiences that can change students' lives in such a positive and meaningful way."

[Lucy Dathan, State Representative, Connecticut General Assembly](#): "For Norwalk, even though 68% of Norwalk Public School students are identified as high needs, Norwalk is set to lose their Alliance District status because it has outperformed the metrics of the program. This will result in a gradual decrease of funds received annually. Students and municipalities alike shouldn't be punished with losing funding because of outperforming the metrics. It is time we give all municipalities the ability to fully fund their public schools and give these students the support they deserve. I implore the Education Committee to support HB 5283."

[Erica DePalma, Norwalk Board of Education, Member](#): "Please support raising the level of our schools to be more equitable to those surrounding towns. We are not in a position to support the needs of children today and certainly won't be a position to support them when federal funding runs out. We cannot wait for ECS dollars to be phased in over the next six

years. An entire generation of children will be lost due to a lack of intervention specialists, special education teachers, counselors, and social workers.”

[Dr. Joseph DiBacco, Superintendent, Ansonia Public Schools](#): “H.B. 5283 would finally bring true equitable funding to our public schools and help ensure all of Connecticut’s students have access to the resources they need to be successful in and outside of the classroom. I urge Committee members to support H.B. 5283 and fully invest in our students.”

[Thomas DiMarco Agriculture Education Instructor, Nonnewaug High School](#): “By continuing to support the state agricultural education programs we will be able to offer these opportunities to more students across the state. Our programs will be better equipped to prepare our students for the ever-changing job markets and 21st century skills that will prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow. More than ever finding new ways to feed our ever-growing population is a priority in our world, and the skills and knowledge that is taught at our agriculture programs is going to help our students to be prepared to face these challenges. Through the support of these programs, we will be making an investment in our state's future.”

[Amy Dowel, State Director, Education Reform Now CT](#): “We support this bill, which would adopt a student-centered funding model to reduce education funding disparities between districts along racial and economic lines. In 2017, the legislature redrafted the Education Cost Sharing formula in a systemic, bipartisan and innovative way. Page 1 | 25 Building off this work, and adding additional equity and fairness priorities, we believe this bill represents a critical next step.”

[Robert F. Eselby, Treasurer, The Connecticut FFA Association](#): “This bill is not only about making more funding for ag schools, it is about leveling the playing field so that kids, no matter their walk of life, can gain experience and have access to real world opportunities that will guarantee them success in the future. Please support Bill number 5283.”

[Andrew Feinstein, Legislative Chair, Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut](#): “H.B. 5283 addresses two critical needs simultaneous. It deals with the critical shortfall in education funding after the stimulus money ends and it deals with the hideous inequity that now exists between rich suburban districts and impoverished urban districts. The bill is worthy of your support.”

[Ruben Felipe, Executive Director, Connecticut Charter Schools Association](#): “HB 5283 would adopt a student-centered funding formula that centers on mitigating the racial and economic gaps in education funding for all public school students. The shift in focus to student centered funding would create a system that actually takes into account the needs of Connecticut’s students. As opposed to the current system that discriminates by race, income and public school type.”

[Subira Gordon, Executive Director, ConnCAN](#): “At a time when the State of Connecticut has a maxed out rainy day fund, and optimistic revenue projections for the coming years, we must invest in ourselves. While our state revenues may be sunny, our educational system is experiencing a downpour. The federal funds help in the shortterm, but we must accelerate our state-level support starting FY25. That way, the investments made during this time of recovery can continue, and serve our students; many of whom can;t wait any longer.”

[Alex Knopp, Sheff Plaintiffs' Representative](#): "As a necessary supplement to this Agreement, we urge you to favorably report HB 5283 which provides three key aspects of an effective and equitable magnet school funding plan: first, a new magnet operating grant rooted in data and tied to the ECS Foundation level and weighted student needs; second, an annual growth multiplier for RESC magnet grants tied to either the greater of the increase in personal income or the percentage increase in inflation; and third, an elimination of the requirement that "sending towns" be required to pay per-student tuitions to magnet operators, which in the past has impeded support for school choice in "sending towns" like East Hartford."

[Gary Turco, State Representative, Connecticut General Assembly](#): "Equally funding all students will help remove the economic and racial disparities we see in the ECS formula today. Additionally, fully funding the ECS formula will help municipalities with fully using federal funding without the fear of a financial cliff when the federal funding goes away."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Dr. Greg J. Florio, Executive Director, Capitol Region Education Council](#): "The current bill, as drafted, is a good faith effort in resolving the lack of sustainable funding; however, the current lag in implementation of funding will unintentionally continue the same long-term funding issue. In addition, CREC and all RESC magnet operators need a safe guard for flat funding, since RESCs do not have a tax base and we need an additional revenue source to cover operating costs without the ability to charge tuition. We continue to discuss these issues with the proponents and would be able to support an amended bill if we can close the implementation gap and create the safe guard method that RESCs need."

[Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns](#): "Although COST supports efforts to fully fund the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant program to provide adequate funding for all school districts in Connecticut, we are concerned that the bill accelerates the implementation of changes to the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula that were negotiated as part of a bipartisan budget in 2017."

[Connecticut Association of School Business Officials](#): "HB 5383 proposes changes to the ECS phase-in plan by resuming annual reductions in aid for FYs 24-29 for towns where the fully funded grant amount is less than the town's base grant amount. Many of these districts are not wealthy and are slated to lose millions in ECS funding per year through this period. This is unfair to many of these towns and does not meet the needs of all our students. Therefore, we strongly urge the Education Committee to recommend elimination of the planned ECS reductions for these towns."

Reported by: Matthew Boucher

Date: 04/12/22