

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-227

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAM FUNDING.

**Vote Date:** 3/11/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

**PH Date:** 3/4/2022

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Education Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

Incrementally increases the per student grant for the operation of interdistrict magnet school programs. Also, the bill adjusts per pupil grants for certain interdistrict magnet schools operated by a regional educational service center.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Education**

"The Department is supportive in concept of periodic increases in the per pupil grants for choice programs. However, The Department is not able to support this proposal which would increase the per pupil grants for all magnet schools, both host and RESC operated, by 8%., Further, there is not sufficient funding in the magnet account to cover the estimated \$21 million cost of this change in policy."

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Tim J. Sullivan Jr., Superintendent, CREC Magnet Schools**

"...I am the Superintendent of the CREC Magnet Schools. We educate 8,500 students from 77 towns in our 18 schools and programs. I am asking you to support SB 227, which provides critical increased funding to support our magnet schools. CREC has a long tradition of offering a quality integrated education to our students, preparing them to live in a more integrated and complex world. Every year, we have a wait list of students who would like to attend CREC, and despite the pandemic, we have continued on that mission."

**Dr. Greg J. Florio, Ed.D., Executive Director, CREC**

"The 8% increase for Sheff magnet schools in SB 227 mitigates tuition increases to school districts, especially Alliance Districts. The state's base funding for Sheff-region magnet schools remains statutorily unchanged for over a decade with only a 2% increase in the per pupil magnet school grant in 2019. This provided short-term relief, but does not cover the full funding needed to sustain magnet schools since it only covers 55% of our operating costs."

**Theodore Martinez, Chair of Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, CREC Education Association**

"As you may be aware, the state increased Sheff magnet school tuition once in 2009/10 from \$9,695 to \$10,443. After several years of maintaining \$10,443, magnet school operators saw a decrease in funding, while still accepting additional students. In 2019, Sheff magnet school operators sought a 5% increase but we received 2%. We continue to operate based on \$10,652. As a result of these limited increases, there is an added burden to magnet school operators to find ways to finance resources for its students. Goodwin University Magnet School System has relied primarily on the magnet school operating grant and local tuition as we do not have any taxing authority. We do the best we can to limit increases to local school tuition expenses; however, that is becoming more and more challenging over time."

**Orlando Rodriguez, Research and Policy Development Specialist, Connecticut Education Association (CEA)**

Inter-district magnet schools have excelled in promoting learning through a commitment to diversity. But like many other districts in the state, challenges from teacher shortages, increasing costs, and the need for more student resources have grown. We support the 8% increase in state funding for all inter-district magnets. We also ask the committee to increase funding for OPEN Choice, which functions as a de facto inter-district program promoting learning through diversity.

**Dr. Charles Dumais, Executive Director, Cooperative Educational Services**

"I am the Executive Director of Cooperative Educational Service (C.E.S.), which serves most of Fairfield County and is one of six Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) in CT. I am requesting your support of SB 227, which allows for an eight percent increase in the Sheff and non-Sheff magnet school grant. There are 32 RESC managed magnets in 24 cities/towns educating over 13,000 students statewide."

**Patricia Bunk, Educator, CREC Magnet Schools**

"I testify today in support of Senate Bill 227 and an increase in funding to our magnet schools. As a CREC educator, I am proud of the strengths and successes of our schools, but also know what a funding increase would mean to our students, educators, and school communities."

**Zuleydy Torres, Student, Civic Leadership High School**

"...I live in New Britain. I am currently an 11th grader at Civic Leadership High School in Enfield, which is a CREC Magnet School. I am asking you to please support SB 227 and the 8% increase in the state magnet grant for CREC Magnet Schools."

**Salvatore F. Menzo, Ed.D., Superintendent, Goodwin University Magnet School System**

"As you may be aware, the state increased Sheff magnet school tuition once in 2009/10 from \$9,695 to \$10,443. After several years of maintaining \$10,443, magnet school operators saw a decrease in funding, while still accepting additional students. In 2019, Sheff magnet school operators sought a 5% increase but we received 2%. We continue to operate based on \$10,652. As a result of these limited increases, there is an added burden to magnet school operators to find ways to finance resources for its students. Goodwin University Magnet School System has relied primarily on the magnet school operating grant and local tuition as we do not have any taxing authority. We do the best we can to limit increases to local school tuition expenses; however, that is becoming more and more challenging over time."

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed.

*\*The Education Committee received over 50 pieces of additional testimony regarding this bill, which are posted on the CGA website.*

**Reported by: Madison Chain**

**Date: 3/16/2022**