

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: Senate Bill 485

AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL
IMPROVEMENTS TO INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOLS OPERATED BY

Title: THE CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL.

Vote Date: 4/5/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/30/2022

File No.: 567

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Introducers:

The Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Co-Sponsors:

Representative Joshua M. Hall, 7th District

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill authorizes \$20 million in General Obligation bonds for grants to the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) for capital improvements to their buildings or structural components of the magnet schools CREC operates. This would help support the state's obligations for Sheff V. O'Neill settlement.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Adaakwah, Vivian, Parent of CREC Magnet School Student, Resident, Manchester, Connecticut](#) supported this bill, stating that she has two children who attend one of CREC's magnet schools, The Academy of Aerospace and Engineering in Windsor. This bill is an important funding mechanism to cover CREC's capital improvements which will allow CREC schools to continue to provide excellent educational opportunities for students.

[The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education](#) supported this bill stating that CREC currently does not have the bonding authority for capital improvements that is available to

tradition school districts. Without a funding mechanism from the state, CREC would have to pass down the costs of capital improvements to local school districts by increasing the cost of tuition. Several CREC magnet school buildings are about twenty years old, and need repairs and improvements. If this bill passes, it will allow CREC to maintain the buildings in a timely fashion, without having to pass the costs down to local districts.

[Amelia Duval, Student, CREC Magnet School](#) currently attends the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts in Hartford, and she has greatly benefited from being a student at a CREC magnet school as magnet schools provide an opportunity for students from different backgrounds to learn together. It is important that the schools have up to date technical equipment and adequate materials to ensure that students are able to thrive.

[Greg Florio, EdD, Executive Director, Capitol Regional Education Council \(CREC\)](#) supported this bill, stating that it is critical to authorize bonding authority to CREC schools for them to properly maintain the 18 Sheff magnet schools. In the past few years, CREC had to make capital improvements to sidewalks, HVAC systems, parking lots, carpeting, gym floors and playgrounds, and since they did not have a mechanism for raising capital funds, they were forced to use funds that came directly from their magnet school's budget for such improvements. Mr. Florio provided a list of capital improvements projects that CREC schools need starting in the beginning of 2023.

[Ty'Laisha Huff, Student, CREC Magnet School](#) stated that capital improvements to CREC magnet schools are the responsibility of the State and not her local school district. Ms. Huff stated that she has benefitted greatly as a student at a CREC magnet school since students at CREC schools are offered a large amount of opportunity to explore different art forms and experiences. Ms. Huff thought that if CREC was able to gain more funding, then her school could continue to prioritize the health and safety for all members of the Academy Family.

[Sarah-Lee Louison-Joseph, Parent of CREC Magnet School Student, Resident, East Hartford, Connecticut](#) asserted that the State is not fulfilling their commitment made through Sheff vs. O'Neill to maintain these schools. She spoke to her son's experience transferring from a public school to a magnet school, which has allowed him to flourish and exceed expectations.

[Tim Sullivan, Superintendent, CREC Magnet Schools](#) stated that when the Sheff case was settled to provide school choice options for parents in Hartford through magnet schools, a major oversight was made in not assuring that these schools could stay sustainable and operational for long periods of time. This bill is designed to solve that issue by allowing CREC schools to make capital improvements through bonding funds. This legislation will benefit 8,500 students from 77 towns across the state in grades P-K to 12 who attend CREC magnet schools.

[Zuleydy Torres, Student, CREC Magnet School](#) has benefitted greatly as a CREC magnet school student because it allowed her to meet people of many different backgrounds and develop strong relationships. Through her magnet school, she had the opportunity to take ECE classes from UCONN and CCP classes from Asnuntuck Community College, which helped her prepare for college level work. Passing this bill would give new classes of students this opportunity as well. It would also prevent funding for extracurriculars and other community building activities from being cut.

Wanda Vargas, Parent of CREC Magnet School Student, Resident, Hartford, Connecticut has a son and daughter who both attend Ana Grace Academy of the Arts, which is a CREC magnet school. Her children have benefited greatly from attending a magnet school due to the curriculum and immersion in the arts. Mrs. Vargas noted that State has made a commitment to these schools through Sheff v. O'Neill. Education should not suffer because the state is not fulfilling its commitment to ensure that these schools are sustainable and getting the critical capital improvements they need.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Christina Pen

Date: 4/20/2022