

OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

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sSB-1

AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION.

As Amended by Senate "A" (LCO 9226)

House Calendar No.: 620

Senate Calendar No.: 323

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

| Agency Affected | Fund-Effect | FY 24 \$ | FY 25 \$ |
|---------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Department of Agriculture | GF - Cost | See Below | See Below |
| Education, Dept. | GF - Cost | See Below | See Below |

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

| Municipalities | Effect | FY 24 \$ | FY 25 \$ |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| Local and Regional School Districts | Cost | See Below | See Below |

Explanation

The bill makes a variety of changes relating to (1) data collected by the State Department of Education (SDE), (2) the Alliance District program, (3) various professional development, recruitment, and retention related to education, (4) other programs administered by SDE and the Department of Agriculture (DoAg), and (5) certain aspects of the public school curriculum and public school climate policy.

These changes result in costs to SDE, DoAg, and local and regional school districts beginning in FY 24, and are described below by section.

Section 1 results in potential one-time costs to the State Department of Education (SDE). It specifies the manner in which SDE must report

demographic and financial data that local and regional school districts submit, and requires SDE to publish definitions of the various categories of data by February 15, 2024. It also requires SDE to present the data in a format that allows for comparison of data across school districts by February 15, 2025.

To the extent the bill requires changes in the financial software used by SDE for tracking and reporting financial and demographic information, SDE could incur one-time costs across FY 24 and FY 25 associated with updating its software.

Sections 2 and 3 require: (1) the State Department of Education to conduct trainings for newly elected members of local and regional boards of education, and (2) the newly elected members to attend such training.

Depending on how many newly elected officials receive this training, SDE may incur annual costs anticipated to be less than \$20,000 beginning in FY 24 associated with hiring a consultant to conduct the training.

Section 4 requires Alliance Districts to establish a Family Resource Center (FRC) in each elementary school. The cost, funding sources, and number of FRCs varies by district. In Hartford, the cost is approximately \$500,000 in FY 23, and that cost is entirely covered by SDE's Family Resource Center grant to the City.¹ In Bristol, the cost is partially covered by a \$200,000 FRC grant, and partially covered by Title I funding and private contributions.

The amendment requires Alliance District funds (a portion of the ECS entitlement) to be used to establish an FRC in every elementary school, which reduces the amount available for other uses. Depending on the cost of the FRCs, the amount of other funding a district is able to obtain for its FRCs, and the amount of Alliance District funding a district

¹ \$5.8 million was appropriated to SDE for Family Resource Centers that schools currently operate across the state in FY 23.

receives, Alliance District funding may not cover the cost of the new FRCs.

Section 5 requires the State Department of Education to publish improvement plans submitted by Alliance Districts. This has no fiscal impact, as it is anticipated that SDE can meet the requirement with existing resources.

Section 6 results in costs to the State Department of Education (SDE) estimated to be \$1 million per year from FY 24 to FY 26. The amendment establishes a wholesome school meals pilot program for Alliance Districts and requires SDE to provide annual grants of \$150,000 for each of three years (FY 24 through FY 26) to five Alliance Districts for participation in the program. The grants result in an annual cost of \$750,000.

There is an additional cost of \$250,000 per year to partner with an organization that can assist with program operations (\$50,000 per participant). As it is anticipated that SDE will partner with an organization that can assist with program operations, it is expected that the department will not require additional personnel to administer the program.

Section 7 requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to conduct a study of the use of virtual reality in high school classrooms and to report the results by January 1, 2025. Depending on the scope of the study, SDE could incur one-time consultant costs of up to \$100,000 across FY 24 and FY 25 if outside assistance is needed to complete the study.

Section 8 requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to establish an educator apprenticeship initiative beginning in FY 24 and requires SDE to seek certification from the Department of Labor for the purpose of leveraging Federal funding for this purpose. Any impact associated with this provision would depend on the extent to which Federal funding is used for the initiative. Apprenticeships certified by the Department of Labor involve paid positions.

Sections 9 and 10 require local and regional school districts to establish plans for increasing educator diversity, submit the plans to the State Department of Education (SDE) for review and approval, and, beginning in FY 25, implement the plans. This has no fiscal impact as it is anticipated that districts and SDE can complete the requirements with existing resources.

Section 11 and 18 establish the Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program (replacing the minority teacher candidate scholarship program) and require at least four existing vacant positions within the State Department of Education (SDE) to be reclassified for the purpose of administering the program.

Under the amendment's provisions, eligible students receive scholarships of up to \$10,000 per year of enrollment in teacher preparation programs. The scholarship program results in a cost to SDE that will vary based on the amount of funding provided and the number of scholarship recipients. Costs associated with filling existing SDE positions will vary based on the titles, salaries and number of the reclassified positions.

The amendment requires SDE to develop scholarship repayment criteria for recipients who are not employed as teachers in-state following graduation, which may result in a revenue gain to the General Fund in the out years.

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

Section 15 results in potential costs annually beginning in FY 24 to local and regional school districts by allowing the State Department of Education to issue adjunct professor permits to certain instructors at institutions of higher education to allow them to teach high school courses in local and regional school districts.

The amendment requires people who work under adjunct professor permits to be considered members of a local or regional school district's

collective bargaining unit for certified employees. Any costs associated with this provision will depend on the terms of any collective bargaining agreement.

The amendment also requires local and regional school districts to provide academic and classroom support services to people who work under adjunct professor permits. Depending on the extent of services provided, there could be minimal costs associated with the purchase of materials, or training, for such employees.

Section 16 expands the state model curriculum to include cursive and, beginning in kindergarten, world languages. The bill allows districts to incorporate some of the curriculum without adopting all of it and maintains that use of the model curriculum is an option (not a requirement). Districts that choose to implement the world languages aspect of the model curriculum may incur a cost associated with the purchase of materials in FY 25 or the out years.

Section 17 allows completion of a credit recovery program to count toward a district's graduation requirements. This has no fiscal impact as it does not change the curriculum any district is required to offer.

Section 19 caps at \$2 million the amount of Open Choice grant funding that would otherwise lapse and is used to provide services to students participating in the Open Choice program, beginning in FY 24. This amount is currently uncapped and applies to excess Open Choice funding above \$1 million. The section results in an anticipated annual savings to the General Fund, equal to the amount of excess Open Choice funds above \$3 million.

Sections 20 to 24 make changes to the timeline in which school districts must adopt a comprehensive reading curriculum. These changes potentially delay when full costs will be incurred, but do not change the overall cost to implement the reading curriculum. The amendment also minimally reduces the cost of implementing the curriculum by limiting it to kindergarten to third grade, instead of starting in prekindergarten.

The extent to which the amendment delays costs varies by district based on whether the district has received a waiver to implement a different comprehensive reading curriculum. The amendment extends the deadline for full implementation of the curriculum to (1) FY 25 for districts that have received a waiver (and these districts may then implement a different model or program); and (2) FY 26 for districts that have not received a waiver but have not begun implementing the curriculum. The amendment requires partial implementation of the curriculum in FY 24 and FY 25 for districts that have not received a waiver and have not begun implementation.

Depending on which curriculum a district chooses to implement, costs can range from approximately \$5,000 to \$13,000 per classroom, or about \$250 to \$650 per student (assuming 20 students in a classroom) associated with purchasing materials.

Section 24 additionally requires the State Department of Education's Center for Literacy Research and Success to conduct a review of issues relating to implementation of the reading curriculum. The amendment does not specify a date by which the Center must complete the review. This has no fiscal impact, as it is anticipated that the Center has the resources to complete the review.

Section 25 results in a cost in FY 24 and FY 25 to the State Department of Education to (1) perform a one-time audit of the administration of the state-wide mastery exam and local standardized assessments, and (2) develop a plan to streamline the use of assessment tools used to monitor student performance. It is anticipated that SDE will need to hire a consultant to perform the audit and to develop the plan, which can result in significant costs depending on the scope of the audit and the plan.

To the extent that SDE is able to obtain Federal funding to conduct the audit, such costs would be at least partially offset. The extent to which costs are offset would depend on the amount of Federal funding SDE is able to obtain.

Section 26 requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg), in consultation with SDE, to administer the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) beginning in FY 24. The program will provide partial reimbursement to eligible boards of education (BOEs) for the purchase of locally and regionally sourced food for school meals. This results in an annual cost to DoAg and a revenue gain to local and regional school districts, beginning in FY 24. The amount of the cost and commensurate revenue gain is dependent on the level of funding provided.

The amendment requires DoAg to develop specific guidelines for the implementation of the program, develop and annually distribute a survey to recipient BOEs, and annually report on the program. The department has sufficient expertise to handle these responsibilities.

The amendment specifies that any unspent funds appropriated for the program will not lapse at the end of FY 24 and would be available in FY 25. Further, in each fiscal year, the amount of reimbursements made to eligible BOEs will be proportionately reduced if the total exceeds the appropriation. The department may accept gifts, grants, and donations to implement the program.

Supplemental grants to eligible BOE may also be provided. These grants may be used for procuring kitchen equipment or engaging with consultants or training relating to the locally and regionally sourced food, with priority given to Alliance Districts.

Section 27 states that in FY 24, and annually thereafter, if any funds appropriated for the CT Grown for CT Kids program are not spent, DoAg must use the unexpended funds to administer the LFSIP established by **Section 26**.

Section 28 has no fiscal impact. It allows local and regional school districts to partner with employers in the aviation or aerospace industry to develop an apprenticeship training program, but does not require districts to contribute any funding towards such a program.

Section 29 results in a cost to SDE of up to \$180,000 in FY 24 to develop a model curriculum for paraeducator training for high school students. The section allows local and regional school districts to adopt the model curriculum. Any impact to districts will depend on the model adopted by SDE.

Based on the development of previous model curricula, it is anticipated SDE will need two durational education consultants, with an annual salary of \$90,000 each.

Section 30 requires local and regional school districts to annually distribute information about certain school choice programs to middle school students and their parents. This results in a potential minimal cost beginning in FY 24 associated with printing such materials.

Section 31 results in a cost to the State Department of Education by establishing a grant program beginning in FY 24 for local and regional school districts to incorporate a preapprenticeship program into their curriculum. The bill requires SDE to provide, to every district, a grant of at least \$1,000 for each student who completes a preapprenticeship program. The bill does not provide any funding for this program. Any impact to local and regional school districts would depend on the provisions of the grant program and the number of students completing a preapprenticeship program.

Section 32 results in annual costs to SDE beginning in FY 24 by expanding opportunities for dual credit and dual enrollment programs, with a particular focus on health care occupations. Costs are associated with: (1) tuition assistance for students in dual enrollment and dual credit programs, (2) resources for students and districts, and (3) curriculum development and professional development to assist in the creation of new career pathways

Section 33 requires the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System to convene a working group to determine the feasibility of developing an aerospace advanced manufacturing high school. This has no fiscal impact.

Section 34 results in minimal costs to local and regional school districts beginning in FY 25 by requiring school nurses to complete 15 hours of professional development training every two years. Such costs are associated with ensuring coverage for nurses participating in training.

Section 35 results in a potential cost to local and regional school districts by requiring them to provide professional development training to school nurses. Costs are associated with the purchase of any materials needed to facilitate the trainings, if the materials are not available free of charge.

Section 36 establishes the Building Educational Responsibility with Greater Improvement Networks Commission. This has no fiscal impact, as the Commission has sufficient expertise to issue the required reports..

Section 37 requires local and regional school districts and other public school operators to annually submit enrollment data as of April 1 to the State Department of Education. This has no fiscal impact as the amendment does not incorporate these enrollment figures into any state aid formula.

Sections 38 to 40 replace Alliance District designations, beginning in FY 25, with: (1) educational reform districts, which are districts that have the 20 lowest accountability index scores, and (2) legacy Alliance Districts, which are districts that were designated as Alliance Districts between FY 13 and FY 24.

The amendment's provisions regarding these designations result in 16 current Alliance Districts no longer being subject to the Alliance District constraints regarding a portion of ECS funding, beginning in FY 25, as they will be legacy Alliance Districts. The PILOT and certain ECS protections for Alliance Districts are extended to the new designations.

The sections additionally allow the districts ranking between 20th-lowest and 50th-lowest in accountability index scores to request assistance from SDE. To the extent that this results in more districts

receiving SDE assistance, there may be a cost to the department beginning in FY 25. The magnitude of the cost is dependent on the level of SDE assistance provided.

Section 41 restricts the amount of Alliance District funding that must be used for minority teacher recruitment and retention. This has no fiscal impact as it does not change the overall amount of Alliance District funding received by any district.

Section 42 makes changes to the school indoor air quality working group and has no fiscal impact.

Section 43 results in costs to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to create the school indoor air quality reporting form. The estimated costs include initial startup costs to create the form and ongoing costs including software licensing and maintenance of the internet form. The costs may be reduced to the extent DAS is able to complete and maintain the form leveraging existing resources within DAS.

Section 44 results in an annual cost beginning in FY 24 to local and regional school districts to test indoor air quality in certain schools annually, rather than every three years. Such costs are anticipated to be no more than \$2,500 per inspection per school. The bill will triple each district's current inspection costs (unless the district is testing more frequently than currently required). Additionally, should the inspection results call for corrective actions, then there are potential costs to districts, which may in some cases be significant depending on the corrective actions needed. The costs are anticipated to vary widely among districts. The bill also delays, from FY 24 to FY 25, the first year in which districts are required to test the HVAC system in each school, and allows districts to receive a waiver from the FY 25 deadline in certain circumstances. These provisions potentially change the timing in which districts will incur costs to test and upgrade their HVAC systems, but do not change the overall cost of doing so.

Section 45 which requires the Department of Public Health to

develop guidelines on optimal thermal comfort for school buildings and facilities, does not result in a fiscal impact to the agency.

Section 46 results in an indeterminate annual cost to SDE to provide grants beginning in FY 24 to two districts designated as Alliance Districts that choose to provide or enhance a pathways to technology early college high school program. The bill does not provide funding for these grants, or specify any grant amounts.

Sections 47 to 71 result in costs to local and regional school districts annually beginning in FY 25 to (1) implement the district school climate policy based on national standards by FY 26, (2) administer a school climate survey biennially beginning in FY 26, and (3) provide training to school employees on social and emotional learning, school climate and restorative practices beginning in FY 25.

Costs associated with the district school climate policy will vary based on the recommendations of the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, which is required to develop state school climate standards (based on national standards) and provide guidance to school districts. Districts that choose to implement the district school climate policy earlier, in FY 24 or FY 25, may have costs in those years.

Costs associated with the school climate survey and employee training are anticipated to be minimal, associated with purchase and printing of materials.

Sections 72 and 73 have no fiscal impact. They make minor changes regarding school resource officers and the related memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a local or regional school district and a local law enforcement agency regarding school resource officers (required under current law).

Section 74 requires districts to adopt a restorative practices policy to be implemented by school employees for incidents involving challenging behavior or student conflict. This has no fiscal impact, as it

is anticipated that districts can adopt this policy with existing resources.

Section 75 has no fiscal impact. It requires the State Department of Education to convene a working group to study current school discipline practices which does not require additional resources.

Sections 76 to 78 require local and regional school districts that report disproportionate rates of suspension or expulsion to submit a report to the State Department of Education regarding their strategies to address those rates. They also require SDE to provide support and oversight of districts that are implementing those strategies.

These sections result in potential costs to the State Department of Education, annually beginning in FY 24, to provide support to districts reporting disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion. It is anticipated SDE may need to hire one person to assist in meeting these responsibilities. This results in annualized costs beginning in FY 25 of \$100,717 in salary and \$43,127 for fringe benefits. Partial year costs of \$50,358 for salary and \$21,650 for fringe would be incurred in FY 24, assuming a January 1, 2024 start date.

The sections along with **Section 81** also establish several reporting requirements for school districts regarding suspensions and expulsions. These provisions have no fiscal impact as it is anticipated that districts can meet these requirements with existing resources.

Sections 79 and 80 have no fiscal impact. They require the State Department of Education to provide a list of assessments for local and regional school districts to use to determine the suicide risk of students experiencing mental health distress. They correspondingly require local and regional school districts to incorporate such assessments into existing policies and procedures for youth suicide prevention. It is anticipated that SDE and local and regional school districts can meet these requirements with existing resources.

Section 82 requires the State Department of Education's School Discipline Council to develop guidelines and recommendations

concerning reducing suspensions and expulsions of students in grades pre-K to grade 2. This has no fiscal impact as it is anticipated that SDE can establish the advisory committee with existing resources.

Sections 83 to 85 allow local and regional school districts to retain any grant funding they receive from the State Department of Education for school mental health workers that is unspent at the end of a fiscal year. The sections also change the timeframe during which grants can be awarded from FY 23 to FY 25, to FY 24 to FY 26. This has no fiscal impact, as it does not change the amount of funding available for such purpose.

Sections 86 and 87 make conforming changes that have no fiscal impact.

Senate "A" strikes the underlying bill and results in the above indicated fiscal impact.

The Out Years

The ongoing fiscal impacts stated above will continue into the future subject to inflation.

The preceding Fiscal Impact statement is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for the purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.