

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6882

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING MANDATE RELIEF.

**Vote Date:** 3/24/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/15/2023

**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

Rep. Tim Ackert, 8<sup>th</sup> Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to conduct a review of laws and regulations to identify obsolete or duplicative mandates on the department and local or regional school boards. It also establishes a task force to review existing education mandates and make recommendations on which can be repealed or changed. These provisions seek to address burdensome or unnecessary requirements in education statutes that exacerbate staffing, funding, and other issues in SDE and school districts.

Additionally, this bill aligns existing in-service training requirements concerning school violence prevention programs with existing requirements. This would ensure consistency in these programs and clarify expectations for schools.

Finally, this bill removes the capstone project requirement for high school graduation in the state to help ease the course and credit burden placed on high school students.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

The substitute language for this bill clarifies Section 4 to allow local or regional boards of education to include the capstone project assessment as part of their respective high school graduation requirements if they choose to do so.

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

**State Department of Education (SDE), Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker;** states that the provisions regarding mandate relief are mandates themselves and would be counterproductive and overly burdensome without the inclusion of increased funding and time to the review process. They recommend eliminating Section 1 of the bill and leaving the mandate review process to the provided task force rather than SDE. Regarding Section 3, they express that the proposed changes regarding school violence prevention training requirements are appropriate and will provide consistency for the plans and expectations of the school community. Regarding Section 4, they express disapproval concerning the removal of the capstone project requirement, stating that it diminishes the student-centered approach to education\*. They also state that it eliminates an alternate opportunity for students to demonstrate their application of many learned skills\*.

*\*The substitute language of this bill addresses these concerns.*

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

**Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Inclusion (CWCSEO), Children's Policy Analyst, TJ Nuccio;** supports this bill, specifically highlighting the proposed review of mandates outlined in Sections 1 and 2.

**Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) & East Hartford Board of Education, Area Director & Chair, Tyron Harris;** supports this bill, though they suggest that Section 3 regarding in-service training requirements be amended to include greater flexibility for school districts to determine the frequency of these trainings. They also recommend changes clarifying the distinction between in-service training and professional learning, tying professional development to certification renewal, and creating a formal Educator Professional Development Council.

**Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Executive Director, Fran Rabinowitz;** expresses support for the school mandate review process outlined in Sections 1 and 2. They state that the abundance of mandates, while well-intentioned, is overwhelming for school districts. They provide a list to the committee of all the current mandates required for schools and note that there have been 125 new mandates issued since 2015.

**Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), Executive Director, Glenn Lungarini;** supports this bill highlighting the review of school mandates in Sections 1 and 2. They state that the time lost to repeated mandated trainings could instead be used toward professional development opportunities. They also express appreciation for the increased focus to implement a more efficient approach to mandated training.

**Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), Executive Director, Betsy Gara;** supports this bill stating that mandates on school districts are often unfunded, unnecessary, and burdensome. They suggest that the task force outlined in Section 2 should also be charged to make recommendations to help school boards improve inefficiencies and reduce cost.

**Cheshire Public Schools, Superintendent, Jeffrey Solan;** supports this bill stating that it is absolutely necessary. They express appreciation to the Education Committee for bringing this proposal forward.

**Cheshire Public Schools, Board of Education Chairman, Anthony Perugini;** supports this bill stating that the task force to review mandates proposed in Section 2 is long overdue. They assert that school districts are burdened with mandates, many of which are unfunded. They also note that these unfunded mandates take away school district resources that could be utilized to address student emotional well-being. Finally, they request amending the bill to require that the review process include feedback from local school districts regarding mandate effectiveness.

**Cheshire Public Schools, Board of Education Member, Faith Ham;** supports this bill expressing displeasure with creating unfunded mandates for school districts without eliminating older mandates. They state that mandates drain school district resources that could be better spent on materials needed by teachers to teach students.

**Old Saybrook Public Schools, Superintendent, Jan Perruccio;** supports this bill stating that educators are currently inundated with mandated trainings and protocols. They assert that the review of existing mandates proposed in Sections 1 and 2 would have a positive impact on public schools within the state.

**Susan Bradford;** supports this bill stating that any paring down of school mandates would be a positive step. They also express frustration regarding the addition of new requirements for school districts each legislative session.

**Teacher, Seth Galante;** supports this bill highlighting the elimination of the capstone project assessment requirement in Section 4. They state that this requirement has been an unfunded mandate that puts an additional burden upon teachers, who are already overworked and underpaid. They assert that, for this program to be successful, additional funding would be necessary.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Linda Delessio;** opposes this bill expressing concerns about the lack of parent and teacher representation on the education mandate task force outlined in Section 2.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:**

**Connecticut Education Association (CEA), Teacher Development Specialist, Kate Field;** expresses support for establishing the education mandate review task force proposed in Section 2. However, they request that the recommendations made by the Professional Development Requirements Working Group created last year also be included in the final report of the task force. They state that implementing these recommendations from the Working Group would save school districts millions of dollars through the elimination of many professional development mandates.

**Reported by: Joseph Guarna**

**Date: 4/11/2023**