

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-14  
AN ACT ASSISTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL  
**Title:** OUTCOMES.  
**Vote Date:** 3/18/2024  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations  
**PH Date:** 3/11/2024  
**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  
Governor Ned Lamont

Representative Kadeem Roberts, 137<sup>th</sup> Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill aims to improve educational outcomes in the State of Connecticut, through empowering the Connecticut State Department of Education and establishing as perceived necessary educational provisions. This proposed language addresses concerns raised by administrators and teachers and works to build up their available network of state support. This bill aims to improve district rates of literacy and advance the practice of state literary instruction.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

The substitute language for this bill makes modifications through omitting Section 4 and Section 6 from proposed language. Section 4, as requiring the State Board of Education to develop a model mobile electronic device usage policy. Section 6, as requiring the State Department of Education to develop a model allocation and expenditure policy. The substitute language for this bill renumbers as necessary following section omission from proposed language.

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

[State of Connecticut, Governor, Ned Lamont](#): expresses support towards the bill and offers comments on three portions of the proposed language; “right to read”, “cell phones in

school”, and “other efforts to improve educational outcomes” as listed in testimony. They express their support towards the proposed language that expands the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities towards educational outcome programs. They state their support towards the proposed provision for the Connecticut State Department of Education to develop a model mobile electronic device classroom usage policy. And state their support towards a feasibility study on offering support to public high school students pursuing advanced courses, as well as the requirement towards the CSDE to issue a fund allocation guide.

**Connecticut Department of Education, Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker:** expresses support for this bill and provided comments in testimony on each section. The Department of Education is listed as in full support of the recommendations outlined in this bill regarding the education budget, as given by Governor Lamont. They state support towards Sections 1-3 of the bill, emphasizing their view of the importance of legislation that supports literary instruction and administrators. They expressed support towards Section 5 of the bill, which calls for a feasibility study of a statewide program supporting public high school students pursuing an advanced course or program. They expressed support towards Section 6 of the bill and stated that they are open to legislation that would enhance guides towards districts for efficient resource allocation.

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

**House Republican Office, Minority Leader, Rep. Vincent Candelora:** expresses comments on Section 2 of the bill, with suggested language changes towards the literacy provisions outlined in this section. They suggest that the Committee amend to require the State Department of Education to grant waivers from ‘Right to Read’ requirements towards school districts with demonstrated high and or increasing rates of literacy.

**Essex Board of Education, Chair & Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Vice President & Region 4 Board of Education, Member, Lon Seidman:** expresses support towards Section 4 of the bill, outlining that they (CABE) are willing to offer their existing model policy addressing the mobile electronic device issue listed, to the State Department of Education for usage consideration. Secondly, they expressed concern towards Section 6 of the bill, a requirement to the Department of Education to develop a targeted budget guideline for local, state, and federal funds. Their concern lists that a guide of this sort would not be applicable across the state, and as such guidance would only hinder boards of education rather than empower as perceived to be intended.

**Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), Executive Director, Betsy Gara:** expresses concern towards their view of the lack of flexibility offered to school districts on ‘Right to Read’ requirements through the bill. Highlighting their belief that school districts should be judged off of their existing programs ability in achieving high reading proficiency levels. They also recommend that the bill be amended to allow for waivers from these requirements, to be obtained by school districts given demonstrated high reading proficiency levels.

**Education Reform Now CT, Executive Director, Amy Dowell:** expresses support towards the responsibility shift perceived from the bill, in which the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities would become tasked with ensuring educator preparation program compliance. Citing their belief in the knowledgebase and capacity of the Office of Dyslexia and Reading

Disabilities to handle such a responsibility. They express support towards the bill language that would require the State Department of Education to audit preparation programs and develop compliance measures towards SDE preferred reading instruction.

**Ledyard High School, Sophomore Student, Mason Banks:** expresses support towards the bill, stating that the bill may be able to address key concerns they have towards Connecticut's education system. They state their belief in the ability of the bill to assess, redistribute, and research for the betterment of the Connecticut education system.

**Madison, Parent, Susan Yankee:** expresses support towards the bill, and offers a suggested language change to include verbiage within the cell phone policy towards a waiver for students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan. They emphasize their belief in the importance of creating this accommodation to maintain accessibility in schools for students with disabilities. They state that if a waiver is not implemented, a budget line item for Assistive Technology would be needed to maintain accessibility for students with disabilities.

**Parent And Teacher, Tim McGuire:** expresses support for the bill language proposing a cap on mobile electronic device access and usage in schools. They emphasize their support on narrowing down how and when mobile electronic devices are utilized in the classroom, and suggested the legislature provide guides towards the usage of educational technologies.

**Reading Leadership Implementation Council, Member, Kim Healy:** expresses support and offer comments on Section 2 and Section 3 of the bill. They express appreciation for the requirement to CT colleges and universities to teach Education students the 'Science of Reading', as listed in Section 2 of the bill.

**School And State Finance Project, Senior Data Analyst, Amber Martin:** expresses support for the intentions of the bill, but gives comments and concerns towards Section 6. They state their belief that the provision within Section 6, requiring the Connecticut State Department of Education to issue allocation recommendation guidelines should be struck from the bill. With a provision implementing a "uniform chart of accounts" put in it's place, a decision they believe would allow for better analysis of educational spending.

**Special Education Equity for Kids of Connecticut (SEEK), President, John Flanders:** expresses support for the bill and offers comments on each section. They express support for Sections, 1,2, and 3, and the language within that builds up 'Right to Read' legislation. They express concern towards Section 4, and the capability of the Department of Education to issue guidance as required and instead advocate for a working group to develop guidance. They comment on Section 5, stating their recommendation that the Connecticut State Department of Education focus on accommodations and/or accessibility for students with disabilities through their study. They express their concern towards Section 6 of the bill, stating their belief that this language of the bill could construe a target budget towards special education that would go against district's federal obligation towards special education.

**State Advisory Council for Special Education (SAC), Chairman of the Legislative Committee, M. Jeffrey Spahr Esq.:** expresses support towards the bill and offers a comment on Section 4 of the proposed language. They suggest that the provision towards proposed

language be expanded to explicitly state the necessary further consideration of students with disabilities in relation to classroom cell phone policy.

**[The Task Force to Analyze the Implementation of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training, Co-Chair & Decoding Dyslexia-CT, Founder, Allison M. Quirion:](#)** expresses support and offers comments on Sections 2 and 3 of the bill. They make a request towards language within Section 2, asking for the inclusion of the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities by name within the process of approving reading assessments. And within the collaboration of the Center for Literary Research and Reading Success in relation to a “collaborative center” for higher education institutions. They express their belief that the duplicative of Section 1 should be removed; and if not that the language should specify compliance measures and audit procedures to be implemented by the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities.

**[Connecticut Council of Administrators in Special Education \(ConnCASE\), President, Aimee Turner:](#)** expresses support towards the proposed language and offered comment on Section 1 A of the bill. They state support towards the legislative requirements outlined within Section 1 A establishing the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities. And explain their view that improved educational outcomes would follow through the ODRD improving higher education preparation programs and staffing, and through guidance from the Office of Special Education.

**[UCONN Department of Educational Leadership, Assistant Professor, Adam McCready:](#)** expresses support and offered comments on Section 4 of the bill’s proposed language. They state that their research suggests that mobile electronic device prohibitions are ineffective towards achieving desired educational outcomes, unless paired with educational guidance for enforcement. They state that their research into this topic was due to continue in the next academic year, and the findings would be made accessible to the State Department of Education.

**[Woodland Regional High School, Library Media Specialist, Jodie D’Alexander:](#)** expresses support for the proposed language designated regulations on mobile electronic device usage within the classroom. They express their view of the overuse of cell phones by students, and state they should only be given exemptions for medical reasons.

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

**[Connecticut Resident, Sharon Scarlett:](#)** expresses opposition towards the bill and states that this proposed language infringes upon parental jurisdiction and independent thought of students. They express their frustration with State educational guidelines and state that gender issues should be removed from classroom discussions and rather that parents should be empowered to raise this issues with their children as they see fit.

**[Victoria Basile:](#)** expresses opposition towards the bill and the proposed language to add gender issues into required curriculum. They state their belief that this inclusion into educational curriculum would confuse and endanger children, and wrongly overshadow parental influence. They express their preference that legislators vote against this proposed language.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:**

*Darien Public Schools, Superintendent, Dr. Alan Addley & Darien Board of Education, Chair, Jill McCammon:* expresses their support towards the bill's language including the 'science of reading' within teacher and administrator preparation programs but emphasize their view that revisions to the bill were still needed in order to achieve as desired improved educational outcomes. They request a revision that would empower districts with discretion to supplement their curriculum as they see fit, moving state curriculum evaluations away from mandates and towards accountable achievements.

**Reported by: Farah Suede**

**Date: 4/8/24**