

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-363

AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION

Title: STATUTES.

Vote Date: 3/20/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/11/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill makes several additions and revisions to existing statutes. Among other provisions, it requires public schools to teach about recycling and renewable energy and requires SBE to help facilitate this instruction as part of the ongoing effort to encourage children to be more aware of how they can mitigate our impact on the environment. It also adds an orientation to school health services to school nurse professional development to help school nurses better understand and prepare to provide safe and appropriate services to their school community. This bill also extends the timeline for boards of education to submit audits to help alleviate the stress on boards to get information and materials submitted on time.

Additionally, this bill prohibits higher education institutions from using edTPA results to deny teacher preparation program completion. This provision aims to help alleviate the state's current teacher shortage by removing a barrier many student teachers face. Many of these aspiring teachers report numerous restrictive problems with edTPA, including losing time in the classroom and with students and issues of discrimination towards student teachers who are people of color, bilingual, or of lower income.

Furthermore, this bill requires boards of education to conform the design of new school playgrounds to the principles of universal design to create spaces where every child can play. These spaces would be more inclusive to all students regardless of language or ability.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language of this bill revises § 5 by replacing language in the original bill that required that payments begin at the start of the school year. It also makes § 8 applicable to playgrounds designed on or after July 1, 2025, rather than July 1, 2024. Moreover, the substitute removes §§ 9 & 10 of the original bill. Finally, it adds the provision on Reading Leadership Implementation Council member terms.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

UConn, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs - The Neag School of Education, Dr. Dorothea Anagnostopoulos: expresses opposition to this bill's provisions that concern edTPA. They state the language retains the mandate that all EPP's require teacher candidates to submit and receive a score on edTPA, which will continue to represent a significant financial burden for many teacher candidates. Instead, they recommend allowing EPPs the flexibility to select or create a candidate performance assessment that meets standards set by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). They state this would enable EPPs to best support candidates' learning and development while reducing financial barriers and burdens for candidates.

State Department of Education (SDE), Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker: provides comments on each section of the underlying bill. They recommend that the effective dates for Sects. 1 and 2 be matched for July 1, 2025 to allow SDE the time to assist boards of education with new curriculum, and they express the desire for time to collaborate with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and district curriculum leaders. They note that Sect. 3 may result in a cost to districts. They furthermore state that the reason for extending the deadlines outlined in Sect. 4 is unclear and express opposition to the section. They express concern with the feasibility of Sect. 5, but state that they are willing to consider paying excess costs for relevant students if their provider is approved in a certain timeframe. They express support for the concept of additional funding for SERC as outlined in Sect. 6, but state that SDE does not have the capacity for it under the current budget. They state that Sect. 7 would limit what higher education institutions can use as program completion requirements. They express support for the inclusive effort of Sect. 8 but note that it may result in increased costs and burdens for playgrounds currently in progress. They support Sect. 9, emphasizing the importance of engagement between school leaders and families to support student success. Finally, they recommend that, instead of implementing Sect. 10, SDE continue to collaborate with CIAC.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), Professor of Education Emeritus, Aram Ayalon: expresses support for Sect. 7 of this bill stating that edTPA high-stake assessment does more harm than good and should be abandoned for several reasons, such as it reduces student teaching experience; it discriminates against students of color, bilingual and poor students; it lacks validity and reliability; it increases teacher shortage; and it reduces teacher preparation quality.

Wallingford Public Schools, Business Manager, Dominic Barone: expresses support for this bill stating the provisions that extend the deadline by one month for the certified reports required by SDE are beneficial to the school district's given the school calendar and other state and federal reporting due at the end of the year.

New Haven Federation of Teachers (NHFT), President, Leslie Blatteau: expresses support for Sect. 6 of this bill stating the edTPA high-stake assessment should no longer be used as a requirement for successful completion of a Teacher Preparation Program (TPP) because it prevents student teachers from the full experience of student teaching by taking time away from attending to students. They state edTPA also discriminates against students of color, bilingual and poor students due to bias in video-based remote assessment, lack of sufficient technology, and reducing the opportunities for using Culturally Responsive Teaching. Finally, they state that studies have suggested edTPA increases the teacher shortage as some student teachers drop out because of the stresses and difficulties associated with the assessment.

Quantum Biopower, Lobbyist & Energy Consultant, Julie Cammarata: expresses support for this bill emphasizing the value of teaching students about food waste, renewable energy, and recycling.

Central Connecticut State University, Graduate Student/Paraeducator, Kate Cummings: expresses support for this bill stating edTPA has a detrimental impact on aspiring educators, thus its elimination would lower obstacles, help address the teacher shortage, and ensures that qualified and dedicated individuals are not prevented from entering the teaching profession.

State Education Resource Center (SERC), Associate Director, Marjorie Davis: expresses support for this bill stating the allocation of funds from SDE as a line-item within their respective budget would fully fund SERC and ensures its capacity to fully serve the state consistent with their statutory mission.

CT Roundtable on Climate & Jobs (CRCJ), Executive Director, Aziz Dehkan: expresses support for this bill stating the provisions that require the inclusion of a comprehensive curriculum on recycling and renewable energy in schools equips students with the knowledge and skills to become responsible stewards of the environment but also paves the way for them to explore rewarding career opportunities in the burgeoning clean technology sector.

CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, Director, Gabriel Epstein: expresses support for Sect. 4 of this bill stating the provisions that add an additional month to issue the SDE certified reports would have a positive impact by alleviating the time crunch in December associated with the simultaneous deadline for the annual OPM audit, state single audit, and SDE certified reports.

ASNC, President/Nurse Coordinator, Paula Feyerharm: expresses support for this bill stating a required orientation for all districts to ensure their new nurses get within the first few months of hire will help to improve the overall quality of nursing care that students receive from their school nurse.

Special Education Equity for Kids of CT (SEEK), President, John Flanders: expresses support for this bill, emphasizing the value of nurses' involvement in IEPs, the importance of APSEPs, the need for recreational facilities and sports opportunities accessible to children with disabilities. They suggest expanding Sect. 10 to ensure that students with school placements under IEPs are given the same ability to participate in their home district intramural and interscholastic sports. They also suggest requiring all school decision makers to have a full understanding of the CIAC rule for students with disabilities to participate in sports.

The following CPAs from CliftonLarsonAllen LLP submitted testimony in support of this bill.

They express support for Sect. 4 of this bill stating the provisions that change the SDE AUP due date to January 31st would help to increase the number of annual audits, State Single Audits, and SDE AUP reports that are issued timely. Additionally, they state it would also help to decrease the amount of compression experienced by CPA firms at the end of each calendar year which would allow them to better serve each municipality and the state.

CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, CPA, David Flint
CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, CPA, Vanessa Rossitto
CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, Principal/CPA, Leslie Zoll

CT Education Association (CEA), Organizer, Katherine Grant: expresses support for Sect. 7 of this bill, citing several studies that suggest edTPA is not valid or reliable, inauthentically measures student teachers' capacities or readiness, diminishes professionalization of the teaching profession, and is not a fair assessment across demographics of student teachers. Also, they request additional language be provided in this bill that provides for fee waivers to student teachers if they must take edTPA.

Association of School Nurses of CT (ASNC), Government Relations Chair, Donna Kosiorowski: expresses support for this bill stating it is a step toward progress for school nurses and school districts by ensuring that nurses are ready and able to provide safe and appropriate services in school in alliance with the mission of education; however, they provide additional suggested language for Sect. 2.

Central Connecticut State University, Student, Jose Martinez: expresses support for Sect. 7 of this bill stating the edTPA assessment has a discriminatory impact on minority groups, diminishes student teaching experiences, unfairly burdens students of color, bilingual individuals, and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. They support removing the edTPA assessment requirements for student teachers.

Central Connecticut State University, PhD Candidate in Education, Michael McWeeney: expresses support for this bill stating the edTPA assessment should not be the contingency for teacher certification and play spaces need to be designed and built for children birth to age 3 because current play structures in public schools are not designed for this specific age group.

Wallingford Board of Education, Nurse Coordinator, Kathleen Neelon: expresses support for this bill stating the standard orientation program would support school nurses with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate meeting the requirements of their job and responsibilities in the educational setting. Further, they state it would also support the school districts themselves by making them aware that the nurse is being properly trained.

PKF O'Connor Davies, Partner, Katherine Patnaude: expresses support for Sect. 4 of this bill stating the change of the deadline to January 31st will make the process smoother for both the auditors and the Board of Education staff and reduce the number of reports that will be issued. They state this will also lessen the burden on SDE as there will be only one report to review rather than two or more when the first is qualified.

CT Education Association (CEA), Director of Policy Research, Ray Rossomando: expresses support for Sect. 7 of this bill, stating edTPA is a time-consuming, cumbersome, and disconnected assessment tool for determining an aspiring teacher's ability to be successful in the classroom, as well as being prohibitively costly. They suggest that if edTPA continues to be required in any capacity, then aspiring educators should not bear the cost. Additionally, they recommend removing Sect. 8 from this bill, stating the proposed parent councils are exclusionary, intrusive, and could potentially create conflict and confusion over jurisdiction and legal obligations.

CT Nurses Association, Executive Director, Kimberly Sandor: expresses support for Sect. 3 of this bill, stating that requiring a new school nurse orientation will support attainment of special knowledge and skills to implement their role with success, including knowledge of the intersection of health and complex federal and state education laws. Additionally, they state it will support attracting and retaining school nurses.

Essex Board of Education, Board Chair, Lon Seidman: expresses support for this bill; however, they also express concerns for several sections. They state concerns with the mandate on boards of education to establish councils in regional schools. Moreover, they express opposition to Sect. 8 of this bill, stating these provisions would ruin the work of magnet schools' sports programs, are against CIAC rules and sours the ideals of the Sheff settlement to have students immersed in an alternative school setting.

Licensed Professional Counselor, Jennifer Simmons: expresses support for Sect. 9 of this bill stating the provisions that require districts to establish a parent advisory council will be a much-needed addition to our current system and will allow for a better representation of community needs.

State Advisory Council for Special Education, Chairman – Legislative Committee, Jeffrey Spahr: expresses support for several sections of this bill. Regarding Sect. 6, they state support for the provisions that fund the activities, supports, and services provided by SERC. Regarding Sect. 8, they express support for the provisions that require boards of education to conform the design of school playground design to the principles of universal design and state that this is important to create spaces where everyone can play, regardless of ability or language. Moreover, regarding Sect. 10, they suggest clarifying the term "magnet schools," stating it is unclear which schools would be classified under such term.

CTCPA, Executive Director & CEO, Bonnie Stewart: expresses support for Sect. 4 of this bill stating that by extending the deadline to January 31st for the certified reports required by SDE would help reduce the challenges school districts and accounting firms face due to tight deadlines.

ConnCASE, President, Aimee Turner: expresses support for this bill, specifically the provisions that fund the State Education Resource Center.

University of Saint Joseph, Director of Clinical Practice, Dianna Wentzell: expresses support for this bill stating the edTPA is a barrier for student teachers that has eclipsed the core purpose of student teaching. Moreover, they suggest replacing edTPA with the Candidate Pre-Service Assessment in Student Teaching (CPAST), which is free, valid, and reliable.

Central Connecticut State University, Professor, Jacob Werblow: expresses support for this bill stating, in their professional experience, edTPA is the primary cause of the drop in enrollment in teacher education and suggests there is no evidence supporting edTPA's validity.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

CT Association of Athletic Directors, Inc. (CAAD), Executive Director, Fred Balsamo: expresses opposition to Sect. 9 of this bill stating it would remove the most talented athletes from those existing magnet school athletic programs and deteriorate the sense of community those schools have established. Additionally, they state Sect. 9 would allow Magnet school students to represent two different schools thus providing an opportunity to a limited group of schools, creating an inequity to all students who are not part of that select group.

Amity Regional School District, Superintendent, Jennifer Byars, Ed.D: expresses opposition to Sects. 9 and 10 of this bill. They state that Sect. 9 undermines the authority of the elected Regional Board of Education as it turns many of their responsibilities over to the parent council. They furthermore express concerns with the way members are elected to the council, stating that it disenfranchises voters within the regional towns who democratically elect their members of their Regional Board of Education and may drive districts away from such cooperative regionalization's instead of towards them. They state these provisions may exacerbate differences and inequities between schools within the same regional district. They express concern that Sect. 10 may cause overlooked issues for magnet school and regional school district programs.

Bristol Public Schools, Superintendent, Catherine Carbone: expresses opposition to this bill stating, as Co-Chair of the CT Association of Urban Superintendents (CAUS) and representative of the 20 school districts in CAUS, 19 out of the 20 CAUS school districts are strongly opposed to the provisions that allow magnet school students to participate in intramural or interscholastic athletics in the school district in which such student resides. They state that if a student chooses to attend magnet school, they should participate in intramural or interscholastic athletics at that magnet school.

CT High School Coaches Assoc. (CHSCA), Executive Director, Len Corto: expresses opposition to Sect. 10 of this bill stating if a student chooses to attend a magnet school, they should not be allowed to return to their local school for the purpose of playing sports. They state concerns that this section will allow magnet school students to take a position on the team from a student who attends their home school, and it will provide an unfair advantage to the magnet school student by allowing them to choose the "better" team, while the local school students are not allowed that choice.

CAS-CIAC, Executive Director, Glenn Lungarini: expresses opposition to Sects. 9 and 10 of this bill. They state the provisions in Sect. 9 presents a conflict with previously established parent councils and elected boards and assumes responsibilities beyond the purview of a building principal. Regarding Sect. 10, they state these provisions fundamentally alter several rules established and supported by the CIAC's 184-member high schools. Further, they state these provisions undermine the foundation of eligibility criteria set by member schools, diminish collaborative efforts between CIAC and SDE over the past year to increase athletic opportunities for Sheff District charter/magnet schools, and would decimate existing magnet school athletic programs.

Region 18 Schools - Lyme & Old Lyme, Superintendent, Ian Neviasser: expresses opposition to Sects. 9 and 10 of this bill. Regarding Sect. 9, they state that getting parents to fill such roles is difficult considering there is a significant time commitment involved. Further, they state the list of requirements in this section is repetitive of existing statute, and thus Sect. 9 should be removed. They state that Sect. 10 poses many issues, including transfer regulations and the possibility of harming interdistrict magnet school sports programs due to lack of participation.

Resident, Emma Quick: expresses opposition to this bill stating it may force the already struggling parent organizations to dissolve, and with it the state's schools will lose both the hands-on volunteer support and the valuable financial support of these organizations.

CREC, Athletic Director, Jonathan Winer: expresses opposition to Sect. 9 of this bill stating it would be detrimental to existing magnet schools and the member schools of the CRAL. They state the most immediate concerns of this section are the decreased attractiveness of the magnet schools, loss of community, issues with scheduling, possible overflow at sending district schools, displacement of sending school student-athletes, illegal recruiting, eligibility, transportation, and "school hopping."

Five individuals submitted anonymous testimony in opposition to this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:

Bethel Public Schools, Superintendent, Dr. Christine Carver: expresses concern with the provisions that require recycling and renewable energy be added to school curricula and require for nursing orientation and training as additional unfunded mandates. Also, they express concern with the provision to provide payment to approved special education facilities at the beginning of the school year. They state payment should be made based on the schedule developed in the contract between the LEA and the district. They express support for Sect. 8 but request that state funding be made available to implement the requirements outlined in such section. Lastly, they oppose Sect. 10, stating there are many logistical, funding, and legal issues to consider, thus they recommend waiting until the results of a pending study are available to move forward with this section.

Derby Public Schools, Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Conway, Jr.: expresses comments on two sections of this bill. Regarding Sect. 9, they state support for the spirit of this bill, however, they state that this should be a regional board initiative. Regarding Sect. 10, they request waiting until the results of the study are available before moving forward with this section.

CT Conference of Municipalities, Advocacy Manager, Lindsay Seti: states support for building spaces with the goal of maximizing usability and access; however, they state concern that this bill does not consider the impact these design specifications may have on the board of education budget. Further, they state that each local school district should be able to build playgrounds that best meet their need holistically.

Region 15 Public Schools, Superintendent, Joshua Smith: states the provisions in Sect. 9 that mandate school governance councils removes a district's ability to implement localized structures and disrupts many of the systems already in place. Additionally, regarding Sect.

10, they state concern that public schools will be unable to hold magnet school students accountable should their actions fall short of the district's expectations or requirements of student athletes.

**Reported by: James Magson & Rosalie
Filippone**

Date: 4/11/24