Education Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5147 / Bill Status / Public Hearing Testimony
Title: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES REGARDING THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS STATUTES.
Vote Date: 3/18/2026
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/20/2026
File No.: 511

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill seeks to (1) place a clear cap on school construction reimbursements and (2) refocus state oversight toward school safety and security. Specifically, the bill limits total reimbursement under the school building project grant program to 100% to ensure fiscal boundaries, even when bonus incentives apply. At the same time, it restructures and renames the School Building Projects Advisory Council to prioritize school safety and security infrastructure, updates its membership to include more relevant expertise and geographic representation, and shifts oversight responsibilities to agencies better aligned with public safety. Overall, the purpose of the bill is to strengthen accountability in school construction funding while modernizing the state's approach to school safety planning and oversight.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

This language updates representation on the council by replacing the board chairman (or designee) with the executive director (or designee) for CTECS participation. It also makes a conforming change tied to a council name update. Finally, it adds new sections (§§ 4–7) to align with recently adopted school construction regulations.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), Commissioner, Michelle Gilman supports the bill as it implements agency-recommended updates to the school construction statutes to improve administration, oversight, and alignment of the program with current needs and

priorities. Her testimony emphasizes that these changes will help ensure the school building project grant program operates more efficiently and effectively, particularly in how funds are managed and how projects are overseen at the state level.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Thomaston Public Schools, Superintendent, Francine Coss supports the bill's focus on school safety but emphasizes that safety-related improvements must remain fully eligible for reimbursement under existing funding structures to avoid placing additional financial burdens on local districts.

Capital Prep Harbor School, State Superintendent, Ayanna Carter supports the bill's focus on improving school facilities and safety, emphasizing the importance of equitable access to high-quality learning environments for all students. Her testimony highlights that continued investment in school infrastructure is critical to supporting student success and closing opportunity gaps.

Anonymous 30 Anonymous 30: submitted general testimony in support of H.B. 5147.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Gene Zingaro: submitted general testimony in opposition of H.B. 5147.

Sarah Dzialo: opposes the bill, expressing concern that the proposed changes could create unintended administrative and financial burdens on school districts. She cautions that the bill's approach may overregulate school construction and funding processes without fully accounting for local district needs and flexibility.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENTS:

Alliance for Connecticut Charter Schools, Chief Advocacy Officer, Maria Matos raises concerns that the bill may unintentionally overlook or disadvantage charter schools within the school construction and funding framework, urging greater consideration of equity across all public-school types. She emphasizes the need to ensure charter schools are not excluded from access to resources that support safe and high-quality learning environments.

Reported by: Mackenzie Frenette **Date: 03/30/26**