

## Latest Developments from the Connecticut General Assembly: The Education Committee Speaks

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### Education Law Notes

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The General Assembly's **Education Committee** was quite active just before its March 21, 2016 deadline for approving bills, voting favorably on a plethora of bills and advancing them out of committee. Among the most noteworthy were bills that would 1) at least delay the use of student mastery examination results in teacher evaluations, 2) make it more difficult for parents to delay enrolling age five and six-year-old students in the schools; 3) require the removal from personnel files record of unsubstantiated reports of abuse and neglect, 4) mandate paraprofessional training, and 5) further implement the usage of the uniform regional school calendar.

The following is a listing (with a brief description, where necessary) of the proposed bills that the Education Committee voted favorably on and advanced out of committee:

S.B. No. 174 (Substitute) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATORS.

S.B. No. 175 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. Among other things, this bill would make revisions to various grant programs, requirements for interstate agreements relating to educator certification, qualifications for bilingual educator certification, and the provision of the alliance district grant program allowing such districts to carry over funds for the next fiscal year. This bill would also establish a "parent university" program.

S.B. No. 176 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING THE SMART START PROGRAM. This bill would make revisions to the Connecticut "Smart Start" pre-school competitive grant program concerning priorities for applicants and how grant recipients are to allocate preschool program spaces, and would mandate that each grant recipient commence preschool programs for each school year on the same date that its commences kindergarten.

S.B. No. 177 (Substitute) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY DECLINING STUDENT ENROLLMENT.

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S.B. No. 178 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONERS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TECHNICAL REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD STATUTES. The bill purports to make various technical revisions to the education and early childhood statutes.

S.B. No. 179 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION ISSUES. This bill would require the Department of Education to study issues relating to education in the state.

S.B. No. 315 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DISTINCTION FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT PROVIDE EXEMPLARY VETERAN EDUCATION PROGRAMS. This bill would establish an exemplary veteran's education program distinction to be awarded to local and regional boards of education that provide students with opportunities to learn about the contributions of veterans.

S.B. No. 316 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING THE POSTING OF CARELINE INFORMATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. This bill would require local and regional boards of education to post in each of their schools the telephone number for the Department of Children and Families' Careline, which could be used to report suspected abuse or neglect of children.

S.B. No. 317 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING DYSLEXIA. This bill would require any person applying for a remedial reading, remedial language arts or reading consultant endorsement to have completed a course that includes instruction on the detection of and interventions for dyslexia.

S.B. No. 318 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING PRIVATE SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION. Notwithstanding the current title, this substitute bill would specify list transportation as among the services that a school district could opt to receive or (not receive) from a regional educational service center ["RESC"]. The latest substitute bill appears to remove the regional uniform school calendar as an item exempt from a school district's ability to opt in or out of RESC services.

S.B. No. 319 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING NOTIFICATION TO SCHOOLS OF PROTECTIVE OR RESTRAINING ORDERS AFFECTING STUDENTS. This bill would require the clerk of the Superior Court to provide notice to a school district after granting a protective or restraining order that involves a student.

S.B. No. 323 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING UNSUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES. Mirroring legislation that was vetoed last year by Governor Malloy, this bill would require the removal of all references in a school employee's personnel records of a report and investigation relating to an unsubstantiated allegation of abuse or neglect by the employee and prohibit the use of such report and investigation against such school employee for any purpose relating to his or her employment. This bill would, however, permit school districts to continue to conduct their own investigations into such employee misconduct.

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S.B. No. 376 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STATE FUNDING FOR EDUCATION. This bill would require the Department of Education to study issues relating to state funding for education.

S.B. No. 377 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING THE SCHOOL HEALTH CURRICULUM AND CANCER AWARENESS. This bill would mandate the inclusion of cancer awareness (including but not limited to age and developmentally appropriate instruction in the performance of self-examinations for breast cancer and testicular cancer) in school health curriculum.

S.B. No. 379 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT TASK FORCE. This bill would delay the termination of the minority teacher recruitment task force until next year, establish a “Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council” within the Department of Education, and require the Department of Education to conduct an annual survey of students regarding the effectiveness of minority teacher recruitment programs.

S.B. No. 380 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXCLUSION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE RESULTS ON THE MASTERY EXAMINATION FROM TEACHER EVALUATIONS. This bill would exclude student performance results on mastery examinations from teacher performance evaluations. The State Board of Education would then be required to revise the model teacher evaluation guidelines and support program to exclude the use of student performance data from the mastery examination.

S.B. No. 381 (Substitute) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY SCHOOL CLIMATE. This bill would establish a task force to review, streamline and align state policies relating to school climate, bullying, school safety and social-emotional learning.

S.B. No. 382 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS. This bill would require the Department of Education and the Office of Higher Education (by no later than December 31, 2016) to enter into an agreement with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation for the purposes of accrediting and establishing standards for teacher preparation programs in the state.

S.B. No. 383 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM. This bill would designate the superintendent of the technical high school system as an administrative head for purposes of carrying out the responsibilities concerning the technical high school system budget, mandate that the budget contain a statement of staffing needs, and establish a manufacturing training for “incumbent workers” pilot program. “Incumbent workers” are defined as individuals who are employed in this state, but who are in need of additional skills, training or education in order to upgrade employment.

H.B. No. 5304 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION OF STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS. This bill authorizes state grant commitments for specific school building projects.

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H.B. No. 5305 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONAL TRAINING. This bill would require local and regional boards of education to annually provide training to all paraprofessionals. Such training shall (1) provide information necessary to instruct paraprofessional on their duties and responsibilities, (2) be consistent with the specific needs of the student(s) to whom the paraprofessional will be assigned, and (3) be provided before the start of the school year by the immediate supervisor of the paraprofessional and with pay. In the case of a paraprofessional who is hired by a board of education after the start of the school year or who has been reassigned during the school year, such training shall be provided to the paraprofessional before such paraprofessional's assignment or reassignment begins.

H.B. No. 5306 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD. This bill would expand the eligibility requirements for the "Care4Kids" program; require certain applicants to the Office of Early Childhood to submit to criminal background checks; permit the Commissioner of Early Childhood to waive the requirement of submitting a new license application; remove the licensure exemption for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America; expand the membership of the Home Visitation Program Consortium and local school readiness councils; authorize the Commissioner to enter into agreements in child care service licensing matters; eliminate the child care facilities grant program; and make other "minor" and technical changes to the early childhood statutes.

H.B. No. 5307 (Substitute) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE UNREASONABLE DELAY OF ENROLLING A CHILD IN KINDERGARTEN. This bill would limit the ability of parents not to enroll five and six year old children in school to circumstances where (1) a licensed physician certifies that the child should not attend school until age seven, or (2) the child has been identified as having a "developmental delay" via either the Birth-to-Three or public school district PPT process.

H.B. No. 5308 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S FRAMEWORK FOR RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION. This bill would require the Department of Education (by no later than July 1, 2017) to update its 2008 framework for response to intervention entitled "Using Scientific Research-Based Interventions: Improving Education for All Students."

H.B. No. 5466 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECKS FOR HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS AND PROVIDING CHILD CARE FOR ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS ENROLLED IN APPROVED HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS. This bill would require background checks for any person who is a household member in a family child care home.

H.B. No. 5467 (Substitute) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RED RIBBON PASS PROGRAM. This bill would establish a Red Ribbon PASS Program to recognize physically active school districts.

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H.B. No. 5468 (Substitute) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO THE RECRUITMENT OF MANUFACTURING TEACHERS.

H.B. No. 5469 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENT DATA PRIVACY. This bill would protect the privacy of student information vis-à-vis school district dealings with contractors. This bill would also limit the disclosure of student “directory information” only to situations where the request is for school purposes.

H.B. No. 5470 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING A PILOT PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL INTERESTED IN PURSUING A COLLEGE DEGREE IN EDUCATION. This bill would establish an “educator pathways pilot program” to encourage and recruit minority students to pursue a career in education.

H.B. No. 5550 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES. Among other things, this bill would: a) delay for one year the various revisions to the high school graduation requirements; b) delay the requirement that a teacher must have a master’s degree in order to receive a professional educators certificate until 2018; c) require the State Department of Education to notify school districts by August 15 of each year of their students’ test scores on mastery examinations; d) revise the truancy law to clarify that in-school suspensions are not absences; e) require that the notice given by a superintendent to a parent of a student found to have a defect in vision or disease of the eyes via the vision screening include a recommendation for the student to be examined by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist; f) limit the ability of school districts to seize and search student mobile devices; g) give the Auditors of Public Accounts the authority to request further information from school districts about private special education placements; and h) allow school districts to establish a “Pipeline for Connecticut’s Future” program, which involves districts partnering with local businesses to offer off site training and course credit to students.

H.B. No. 5553 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ISSUES. This bill would require the Department of Education to study issues relating to elementary and secondary education issues in the state.

H.B. No. 5554 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL EDUCATION. This bill would require the Department of Administrative Services to review projected enrollment figures included in grant applications for school building projects, and perform a regional school capacity assessment that analyzes student enrollment for each school facility in adjacent school districts. This bill would also authorize regional educational service centers to enter into agreements with school districts to provide administrative services, and permit school districts to use the aggregate expenditure data of a cooperative arrangement for purposes of reporting requirements.

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H.B. No. 5555 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT AND PROHIBITING THE INCLUSION OF PARTICIPATION RATES FOR THE STATE-WIDE MASTERY EXAMINATION IN THE CALCULATION OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX SCORE. This bill would update the minimum budget requirement ["MBR"] statute so as to prohibit the inclusion of participation rates for the state-wide mastery examination in the calculation of a school district's "accountability index" score; this bill would thus allow "high performing" school districts to be eligible for relief from the MBR regardless of such participation rates.

H.B. No. 5556 (Substitute) AN ACT CONCERNING MAGNET SCHOOL REIMBURSEMENT FOR NEW LONDON. Formerly a bill concerning the regional uniform school calendar, the substitute bill addresses a waiver of certain enrollment requirements for eligibility for magnet school grants for New London.

H.B. No. 5557 (Substitute) AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TO DEVELOP A PROPOSED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR COMPENSATION SCHEDULE. This bill would require the Office of Early Childhood to establish by 2017 an early childhood educator compensation schedule for employees of early childhood education programs accepting state funds for infant, toddler and preschool spaces for child care or school readiness programs, and would require such programs to pay staff in accordance with the schedule.

The 2016 session of the Connecticut General Assembly is scheduled to adjourn on May 3, 2016; we will see which of the above bills are passed by both houses of the General Assembly prior to adjournment and then sent to the Governor's desk for signature. Stay tuned.

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