

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 15-177

HB6978

House	1872-1884	12
Senate	3133, 3141-3143	4
Education	854, 857-860, 1077-1078, 1088, 1090	9
		25

Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public
Hearing(s) and/or Senate and House of Representatives
Proceedings

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2015**

**VOL.58
PART 6
1740 – 2092**

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

55
May 7, 2015

roll. Will members please report to the Chamber immediately.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted? Will the members please check the board to determine if your vote is properly cast. If all members have voted, the machine will be locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

[gavel] The Clerk will please announce the tally.

CLERK:

House Bill 6807	
Total Number Voting	144
Necessary for Passage	73
Those voting Yea	144
Those voting Nay	0
Absent and not voting	7

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

The bill passes. [gavel]

Will the Clerk please call Calendar No. 312?

CLERK:

On page 23, Calendar No. 312, Favorable Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Education, House Bill No. 6978, AN ACT REQUIRING THE COMMISSIONER OF

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

56
May 7, 2015

EDUCATION TO DEVELOP AND SUBMIT A COMPREHENSIVE
STATE-WIDE INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOL PLAN.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move acceptance of
Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of
the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

The question before the Chamber is on
acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable
Report and passage of the bill. Representative
Fleischmann, you have the floor, sir.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may I say it's
nice to see you up there.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Likewise, sir.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

The measure that's now before us takes the
deadline that the Education Commissioner has for
developing a state-wide comprehensive plan for
interdistrict magnet schools and sets it at October
1, 2016. Under current law that's not changed by

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

57
May 7, 2015

this measure, the Commissioner can't accept applications to create new magnet schools outside of the Sheff region until this plan is developed.

This is really an important precept. Magnet schools are a wonderful part of the whole menu of schools that we have in the State of Connecticut. They have not been developed according to a comprehensive plan to date in the state, which means that some communities are very well-served by magnets and others don't have the number they deserve. It is our hope, in a bipartisan way, to have the Commissioner work to create a plan that reflects the needs of the entire state, every metro region, and then have magnet school applications considered according to that plan.

So I'd like to thank my co-chair, the ranking members of the Committee, the vice chairs of the Committee, and all the members of the Committee actually for their support of this measure, which did pass the Education Committee unanimously. It's good policy to have a state-wide plan before you consider individual applications and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this measure before us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

58
May 7, 2015

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Will you remark further on this bill?

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Can I just ask, my microphone was apparently very loud last time? Mr. Speaker, would you just let me know if this is abnormally loud because apparently it was last time. [laughs] Okay. Thank you.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I just have a couple of remarks on the bill if I may. This is actually - the bill requires, as the good Chair of Education said, that a plan for the continuing development and maintenance of magnet schools be developed and this is not the first time we've had legislation like that. This plan was required several years ago and this is nothing new. We never got the plan.

So this bill will require that this plan be delivered and that, in addition, I think it's interesting to note that we have another piece of legislation coming up that will require the development of a long-term, strategic plan for all of K-12 public education in the state. This fits

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

59
May 7, 2015

in very well with that exercise and will allow us to go forward with magnet schools in a much more strategic and well-planned out way.

So I stand in support of the bill and I would urge everyone in the Chamber to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Thank you, madam. Representative Ziobron of the 34th.

REP. ZIOBRON (34th):

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It's great to see you up there. I just have a couple of quick questions for the proponent of the bill, please. Through you, sir.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

You may proceed, madam.

REP. ZIOBRON (34th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm reading the bill, and I see, of course, that the date has changed from January 1, 2011, and has been updated to October 1, 2016, and my question for the good Chair of the Education Committee is why wasn't the plan done by the date in the previous legislation and had there been any movement by the previous

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

60
May 7, 2015

Commissioner to develop such a plan? Through you,
please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to my good
colleague, it is a mystery to me why the State
Department failed to submit this plan by the
original date requested by this General Assembly.
I have been given the sense that current Department
of Education has now started to get moving on this,
recognizing that it is an issue and I'm hopeful
that they will act by October 1, 2016.

I'll point out that, if they fail to act,
there is a consequence, namely the State Department
can't contemplate applications for magnet schools
because they have failed in their duty to the state
so, we're - we have a sense that while we were
disappointed last time, the State Department is
listening to us this time. Through you, Mr.
Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Representative Ziobron.

REP. ZIOBRON (34th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that answer. You know, I think it's critically important that we understand the amount of investment that the state taxpayers are gonna be making to these sorts of programs. My community, a very small, rural community, is really feeling the pressure. My public schools are really feeling the pressure with magnet school and the explosion of magnet schools outside of the Sheff region and I'm curious - and I know that many members of the Education Committee potentially feel the same way and I'm curious from the good Chairman, you know, there's no mention of benchmarks in this bill but I am - would like to know if the Education Committee will be meeting with them to discuss the plan as it's being progressed through to the date, if there is some sort of conversation that will be occurring? Through you, Deputy Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, while it's not delineated in the bill, for this process as for many others, it's our hope to have an iterative

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

62
May 7, 2015

conversation with the Department as the plan is being developed and I heard a mention of the word benchmarks. Really, the impetus for this bill is that we have some regions of Connecticut that have many, many magnet schools and others that have very few and there's no rhyme or reason to it except for the fact that some municipalities and school districts decided to take advantage of the statute and others were slower off the mark and that does not seem fair to the students or educators of Connecticut, so our goal is to indeed establish a plan that reflects logical numbers of schools by region reflective of the needs of the regions. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Representative Ziobron.

REP. ZIOBRON (34th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm really glad to hear that because I think we have a responsibility to every child, especially the children in our public schools, when we're putting our tax dollars in other places, so I'm very interested in seeing this plan developed. I think it will be a benefit for the entire community and all of the students of

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

63
May 7, 2015

Connecticut and I look forward to supporting the
bill. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Thank you, madam.

Will you remark further? Will you remark
further? Will you remark further on this bill? If
not - Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, through you, a
question to the proponent of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Frame your question, sir.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you. And I just, for my records, I do
have the concern that Representative Ziobron did
bring up on the holding somebody's feet to the fire
on this and I'll make a comment on that but the
question is any magnet school now that has been
approved and in the works is not affected in any
way by this legislation? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, that is correct.

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

64
May 7, 2015

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

And I thank the good Chair on his work and his comments and that's the only question I did have but, just so you know that one question was brought up by the good ranking member of Appropriations earlier was that we changed the date. I think two years ago, I asked the same question to the Commissioner but what we're doing here is changing a date that we have never actually held the Commissioner of the Department of Education in check on before, so this legislation has been intact for these many years and we have never paid attention to that, I guess, and we've continued to build, you know, fund magnet schools actually against our state statute.

So, hopefully, that - this new awareness of this with a new Commissioner that we will make sure that the statute is intact, so thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the good Chairman.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Thank you, sir.

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

65
May 7, 2015

Will you remark further on this bill?

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify a point that was raised by the good former ranking member of the Education Committee. State statute has not been violated. There have been no applications for magnet schools outside of the Sheff region, accepted or approved, since our original statute was put in place in 2009.

What has happened is some additional construction of magnet schools within the Sheff region. That is required by the state under the terms of the Sheff v. O'Neill stipulated agreement, so that's sort of an exception. We don't have latitude right now since we are under what is an agreement with the plaintiffs who prevailed in the Sheff v. O'Neill lawsuit regarding what happens in the Sheff v. O'Neill region. But, any place outside of Sheff v. O'Neill region, which is essentially the Capitol area, there have been no applications accepted and approved by the State Department of Education pursuant to our statute, so our statutory framework has been respected.

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

66
May 7, 2015

However, the intent of this Assembly has not been respected.

It was our intent to have a comprehensive plan so that if you're living in the region of Norwalk or Stamford or New London or New Britain, you could have an application for a magnet school so, hopefully with passage of this today, we will get a plan put forward and we will have applications begin moving again in 2016. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

Thank you, sir.

Will you remark further on this bill? Will you remark further on this bill? If not, will staff and guests please come to the Well of the House. Will the members please take your seats. The machine will be opened.

[bell ringing]

CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by
roll. Members to the Chamber, please. The House

/dd
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

67
May 7, 2015

of Representatives is voting by roll. Members to
the Chamber immediately.

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

[gavel] Have all the members voted? Have all
the members voted? Will the members please check
the board to determine if your vote is properly
cast. If all members have voted, the machine will
be locked and the Clerk will take a tally.

The Clerk will please announce the tally.

CLERK:

House Bill 6978	
Total Number Voting	144
Necessary for Passage	73
Those voting Yea	144
Those voting Nay	0
Absent and not voting	7

DEPUTY SPEAKER MORRIS:

The bill passes. [gavel]

Will the Clerk please call Calendar No. 445?

CLERK:

On page 36, Calendar 445, Favorable Report of
the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and
Development, Substitute House Bill 6953, AN ACT

**S - 688
CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2015**

**VOL. 58
PART 10
2993 – 3245**

/t1
SENATE

147
June 2, 2015

Thank you, Madam President. On Calendar Page 8,
Calendar 481, House Bill 6978. I'd like to place that
item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF:

On Calendar Page 15, Calendar 535, House Bill 6730.
I'd like to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF:

On Calendar Page 17, Calendar 552, House Bill 6884.
I'd like to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. On Calendar Page 4,
Calendar 382, House Bill 6915. I'd like to place that
item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF:

On Calendar Page 4, Calendar 383, House Bill 6723.
I'd like to place that item on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

/tl
SENATE

155
June 2, 2015

THE CLERK:

House Bill 6915. Page 4, Calendar 383 -

THE CHAIR:

Hold on a minute. Mr. Clerk, you're gonna have to use your microphone so we can hear you, please. I apologize. Thank you.

THE CLERK:

Page 4, Calendar 382, House Bill 6915. Page 4, Calendar 383, House Bill 6723. Page 5, Calendar 390, House Bill 6317. Page 5, Calendar 437, House Bill 6771. Page 5, 438, House Bill 6772. On Page 6, Calendar 439, House Bill 6259. On Page 8, Calendar 480, House Bill 6910.

On Page 8 also, Calendar 481, House Bill 6978, and on Page 9, Calendar 500, House Bill 6579. On Page 10, Calendar 502, House Bill 6868. Page 11, Calendar 511, House Bill 6937. Also on Page 11, Calendar 513, House Bill 6986, and on Page 12, Calendar 515, House Bill 6902.

Also on Page 12, Calendar 521, House Bill 6971. On Page 12 again, Calendar 522, House Bill 6834. Page 12, Calendar 518, House Bill 6770. On Page 13, Calendar 524, House Bill 6997. Also on Page 13, Calendar 525, House Bill 6984, and on Page 14, Calendar 530, House Bill 6977.

Also on Page 14, Calendar 531, House Bill 6994. Page 15, Calendar 535, House Bill 6730. Page 17, Calendar 552, House Bill 6884. Page 17, Calendar 557, House Bill 6155. On Page 18, Calendar 564, House Bill 7000. Page 18 again, 566, House Bill 6138. Also on Page 18, Calendar 571, House Bill 5092, and on Page 19, Calendar 577, House Bill 6853.

On Page 20, Calendar 585, House Bill 6571. Page 20, Calendar 578, House Bill 6852. On Page 23, Calendar 606, House Bill 5660, and on Page 24, Calendar 609, House Bill 5257. Page 24, Calendar 611, House Bill 7060. Page 24, Calendar 610, House Bill 7050. On Page 25, Calendar 617, House Bill 6020.

/tl
SENATE

156
June 2, 2015

On Page 26, Calendar 619, House Bill 6750. Also on Page 26, Calendar 620, House Bill 6745. Page 27, Calendar 627, House Bill 5101. Page 29, Calendar 635, House Bill 5110. Also on Page 29, Calendar 641, House Bill 6967. On Page 30, Calendar 645, House Bill 6943, and also on Page 30, Calendar 642, 6707.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Mr. Clerk. We're adding - we have to add one more. Hold on for one second, please.

[pause]

THE CLERK:

On - and the last item is on Page 19, Calendar 576, House Bill 6976.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, will you call - hold on a minute. There's a question. Senator Kelly, you have a question? Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY:

Thank you, Madam President. That last item on Page 19, the Clerk called 576, House Bill 6976. Was it supposed to be 57 - Calendar No. 575, 6975?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. And thanks to Senator Kelly for the - catching that. Yes, it is Calendar 575, House Bill 6975.

THE CHAIR:

6975.

THE CLERK:

/tl
SENATE

157
June 2, 2015

And that is Page 19, Calendar 575, House Bill 6975.

THE CHAIR:

Are there any other corrections anybody has? If not, at this time, Mr. Clerk, will you please call for a roll call vote on the Consent Calendar. The machine is open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call on today's Consent Calendar has been ordered in the Senate.

[pause]

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted, all members have voted. The machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, please call a tally. You wanna call on the Consent Calendar? Yes, it's closed. It's closed on the machine here.

THE CLERK:

On today's Consent Calendar

Total Number Voting	36
Necessary for Passage	19
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Absent/not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar passes. [gavel] Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF:

Thank you, Madam President. Before we adjourn, I'd like to yield for any points or announcements.

THE CHAIR:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**EDUCATION
PART 2
551 – 1091**

2015

Two quick things. You're asking for more reporting requirements on special ed. We would make two quick suggestions. One is in the strategic school profiles, please provide -- or ask for information from school districts as to how much they apply for excess cost reimbursement and how much they actually got.

And, also, as you know, traditional school districts provide special education services to our magnet and charter schools. We'd like to see the amount of money that goes for those special education services also included in the strategic school profile so we get a real handle on what the costs are.

Thanks very much.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Is that request in your testimony?

JAMES FINLEY: Yes, it is.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. Great. Anybody have any questions?

All right. Thank you very much for your testimony.

JAMES FINLEY: Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Next speaker is Randy Collins. Good evening.

RANDALL COLLINS: Good evening. Is it too early to say goodnight?

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Yeah. It's too early yet. We're not quite there yet. Hoping that the lights don't go out without saying goodnight so -- good evening.

RANDALL COLLINS: Good evening, Senator Slossberg, Members of the Committee. My name is Randy

SB1056

HB697B

RANDALL COLLINS: That's right. And we -- I -- CAPSS has submitted written testimony on all three of those bills I just spoke of.

But, interestingly enough, in this education committee, or your predecessors on the committee, did request a study that was delivered in 2012.

And in that study, which I have here and I can provide to you, there are many recommendations. -- I -- that's exactly what we're advocating, that relook at the reform effort. Because it may not be what we want today as it was in 2010.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. Thank you very much for that. And I'm glad you brought up the point about the magnet school, the -- the recommendation for a plan.

HB6978

And, in fact, that was the -- that was the genesis of that -- of this bill was this Committee's frustration with the fact that that plan was never created.

And we are looking for some sort of a plan before we start moving forward with any new magnet schools along those lines.

So I thank you for that. And I will represent -- I will recognize Representative McCarty.

REP. McCARTY: Thank you, Madam Chair, and welcome, Randy. And thank you for staying for the full day and for your very kind remarks. I appreciate it.

Can you just -- and I don't know if this puts you on the spot or not -- but with the CAPSS, can you tell -- where the superintendent -- does it look like it was a fairly large leap from what was required -- or is required for graduation requirements at right now to go up

to 25, was there any thinking by CAPSS on whether that is too large of a leap, five -- five -- I know you want it delayed, but is the amount of credits also being discussed?

RANDALL COLLINS: I don't -- I don't think it was the -- was the issue on Carnegie units in relation to the fact that nowadays with personalized learning and master-based diplomas and internships, there are other ways of doing it besides just adding Carnegie units.

The issue was not necessarily the number, Representative McCarty, but it was also the specificity of what you were asking to be added so that other areas -- like art, music, physical education, technology -- were not there. So, as you know, haven't been on the board for so long, that we -- the focus tends to be on what's being tested.

REP. McCARTY: Right.

RANDALL COLLINS: Unfortunately.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Representative?

REP. McCARTY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just -- also I just want to extend my appreciation for bringing forward CAPPS' idea to go ahead and look at a comprehensive strategy and plan for the magnet schools. I think that's very important.

Thank you very much. Good to see you.

RANDALL COLLINS: I -- I -- may I just quickly?

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Sure.

RANDALL COLLINS: I think the problem is -- and we did it in Waterford with the Friendship School -- the problem is the magnet schools tend to crop up where a good idea comes up. All

HB 697B

of a sudden, someone has a good idea, or two towns have a good idea, and because it's now 95 percent funded -- it was 100 percent at the time we did Friendship School, there's a school.

And there's really no thought of where they need to be or what they need to be addressing, for the state's purposes.

So that was the intent.

REP. McCARTY: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Very good. Thank you very much for being here and -- oh, I'm sorry. Representative Johnson. Didn't see you way down there.

REP. JOHNSON: That's okay. Thank you so much. Thank you for your testimony today.

Just a -- just -- just going back to the history of the magnet schools and their reason for being in the state of Connecticut, really, historically they were there to address racial discrimination and racial isolation and economic isolation and -- so are you saying, then, that they're not doing that at this point in time?

RANDALL COLLINS: I'm saying -- well, first of all, I go way back to Governor Weicker's committees that reform to do -- also to look at that -- that issue, along with socioeconomic isolation.

I'm not saying that. I'm just saying I don't think we know. And I don't think we know what they're doing in terms of that issue or I don't think we know where we need the next magnet school to be because of that issue.

There is no plan. So there needs to be some plan. They may be doing very well at that. I just don't know.

REP. JOHNSON: Thank you for that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Okay. Thank you, Representative.

Any other questions? Okay. Thank you again.

RANDALL COLLINS: Thank you.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: All right. That concludes our speakers for Senate Bill No. 1056.

Our next bill is House Bill No. 6968, AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE USE OF SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONALS TO SERVE AS SHORT-TERM SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS.

Our first person signed up is Mary Russeel (phonetic).

MARY RUSSELL: Russell.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Russell. Well, you know, they have you down here as two Es. I just read it the way it says it. So Mary Russell, welcome.

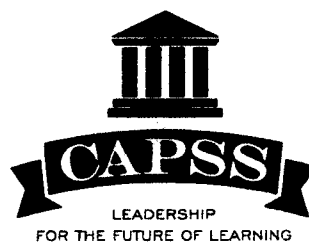
MARY RUSSELL: Good evening, Senator Shlossberg (phonetic), Representative Fleischmann (phonetic).

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: They're giggling because I have two Ss so Shlossberg --

MARY RUSSELL: I did it on purpose.

SENATOR SLOSSBERG: Turnaround is fair play there. You got me.

MARY RUSSELL: Again, my name is Mary Russell. And I'm a paraprofessional, and a legislative



**TESTIMONY of the CT ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS
Before the Education Committee**

IN SUPPORT OF: HB 6978

**An Act Requiring the Commissioner of Education to Develop and Submit a Comprehensive
State-Wide Interdistrict Magnet School Plan**

The CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) supports legislation that would result in the development of a systematic state-wide inter-district magnet school plan.

Over a number of years, many magnet schools have been established across CT. Some of these schools have been put in place as part of the settlement to which the State agreed in the Scheff vs. O'Neill litigation. Other schools have been established for various reasons in just about every region of the state.

The development of these schools, however, should have been part of a well thought out state wide strategy for improving schooling in CT, a strategy that would align magnet schools with all of the other efforts being made especially by local school districts. Absent such a plan, the following has occurred.

- The funding system for magnet schools varies from one region of the state to the other.
- The financial burden for magnet school tuition for some districts in the state is onerous.
- The sustainability of effective magnet schools is not being sufficiently addressed
- The potential for magnet schools to personalize learning for students and thus to be a component of the statewide effort in this regard to improve schooling state wide is not being realized.
- The responsibility for paying the tuition for children who are enrolled in pre-school magnet schools has been a matter of controversy.

Because of this, a considerable amount of state funds has been expended for magnet schools and maximum benefit has not been realized from this expenditure.

Accordingly, the establishment of magnet schools absent a well thought out strategy for employing magnet schools, as one of the components for improving schooling in general cannot be defended.

CAPSS, therefore, proposes:

- **That the Legislature require the CSDE to develop with meaningful participation by all relevant parties a state wide plan for magnet schools and that this plan include at least the following.**
 - **A strategy for making magnet schools one of the means for improving student achievement in CT.**
 - **A uniform and equitable system statewide for funding magnet schools, a system that does not impose any financial obligation on local school districts.**
 - **A strategy for insuring the long range sustainability of effective magnet schools.**

- **That any new magnet school application with enrollment from multiple districts be required to include in the application to the CSDE an accompanying ten-year financial plan that projects costs, revenue streams and anticipated financial impact on sending districts.**

P1 L4



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut General Assembly
Education Committee
Testimony of Interim Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell
March 11, 2015

Thank you Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher, Representative Lavielle, and members of the Education Committee. For the record, I am Dianna Wentzell, Interim Commissioner at the Department of Education.

It is my pleasure to be back before you to touch on several proposed bills on today's agenda.

First, House Bill No. 6980, An Act Concerning The Timing Of Teacher Performance Evaluations and Senate Bill No. 1057, An Act Concerning The Development Of A Rolling Three-Year Capital Improvement And Capital Equipment Plan For The Technical High School System, are agency submitted proposals. I would like to thank the Committee for raising both for consideration.

SB1058
SB1053
HB6974
SB1056
HB6976
HB6978
SB1059
SB1060

House Bill 6980 is the result of feedback received concerning the state's system of educator evaluation and support. The proposal before you reflects our continued partnership with school districts. It offers additional flexibility with end of academic year data reporting to boards of education and the timeline for state approval of educator evaluation and support plans, including their subsequent adoption and implementation at the local level.

Over the past two years, we have heard that the June 1 deadline to report end of year summative evaluation data to local or regional boards of education – currently in statute – does not provide school and district administrators sufficient time to complete their full evaluation cycle, which includes end of year conferences with educators where a summative rating is provided. Currently, all summative ratings must be reported to boards of education by June 1, and to the Commissioner of Education by June 30. In many districts, however, end of year meetings run right up to the very end of the academic year. This proposal would move the board report requirement to June 30 and reporting to the Commissioner of Education to September 15.

Similarly, the process concerning district submission of their evaluation and support plans to the Department is an iterative one. In the case where plan revisions may need to be reconsidered by local Professional Development and Evaluation Committees and the local or regional board of education – an increasingly difficult task when school is not in session – we are seeking additional time, from September 1 to October 15, for local or regional boards of education to adopt their state-approved educator evaluation and support plans.

Districts continue to implement their teacher evaluation and support plans with impressive commitment and fidelity. The Department believes this additional flexibility will enhance these efforts.

House Bill No. 6974, An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Achievement Gap Task Force Concerning The Creation Of A Director Of Reading Initiatives At The Department Of Education is a proposal that the CSDE is in the process of addressing. The reading position has been posted and can be viewed via our website. The closing date for candidate submissions is April 1, 2015; we hope to have the position filled within the next couple of months. Therefore, we do not believe legislation is necessary.

Senate Bill No. 1056 An Act Concerning The Excess Cost Threshold And The Collection Of Data Relating To Per Pupil Costs For Special Education, as proposed, raises concerns regarding new data reporting requirements that would substantially increase burden at the local level and the state level. Special education costs can have significant impact on local education budgets. We would welcome the opportunity to continue a dialogue with the General Assembly during the legislative session to ensure that we help alleviate some burden and find efficiencies for our districts while honoring our commitment for an inclusive, quality education for our students with disabilities.

House Bill No. 6976, An Act Concerning A Study Of Recovery High Schools proposes a study of high schools designed to serve students recovering from substance abuse. Currently, the CSDE is substantially involved in a standing committee that is examining alternative schools. Current work may already align with this proposal. The CSDE encourages further conversation among stakeholders about leveraging existing work on alternative schools.

House Bill No. 6978, An Act Requiring The Commissioner Of Education To Develop And Submit A Comprehensive State-Wide Interdistrict Magnet School Plan would sanction development of a blueprint for magnet school planning into the future, something the CSDE is already working towards.

With their theme-based curricula in support of individualized learning, magnets have proven to be extremely popular public school choice models. Questions of school costs, equitable funding structures, and escalating transportation costs are just some of the areas of concern moving forward. The CSDE would welcome these conversations about how best to plan statewide for the future of magnet schools.

Senate Bill No. 1059, An Act Concerning High School Graduation Requirements would extend, by one year (and thus affect students scheduled to graduate from high school in 2021 instead of 2020), the implementation of new high school graduation requirements. The proposal would allow additional time for the CSDE to develop approaches to support districts with these substantive changes, as districts and other stakeholders continue to raise concerns about staffing and scheduling implications. Furthermore, given Connecticut Core Standards rollout, and existing mastery based- and experiential learning initiatives, the proposal offers a reasonable approach.

Other points to consider within this proposal are opportunities to earn high school credits outside the traditional classroom. Such revisions have generally been conceived, rightly, at the local level through boards of education. It should be noted that in many communities, acquiring credits through institutes of higher education is already possible, as is credit for recognized community service. CSDE would welcome continued conversation on how the Department may support these existing initiatives.