

## Legislative History for Connecticut Act

### PA 17-29

#### HB7159

House	1173-1178	6
Senate	1702, 1887-1888	3
Education	101-104, 110-113, 122, 354-363, 456-458, 592-593	24

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Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public  
Hearing(s) and/or Senate and House of Representatives  
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**CONNECTICUT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS  
2017**

**VOL.60  
PART 3  
845 – 1244**

Calendar 184, favorable report of the Joint Standing Committee on Education. House Bill No. 7159, AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S SEAL OF BILITERACY.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE (48TH):

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18TH):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move acceptance to the Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the Bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE (48TH):

The question before the Chamber is acceptance of the Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the Bill. Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18TH):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am happy to bring before the Chamber this Bill today that passed the Education Committee unanimously both this year and last year as part of a larger Bill. Under the measure before us, we would establish criteria through the State Board of Ed for awarding a

Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy, which would go on a high school graduate's diploma, to recognize proficiency in English and at least one other world language. With that foreign language being defined as a foreign spoken language or American sign language, or some other world language.

Once such a seal would be awarded, the Bill would require boards to include a designation on the recipient student's transcripts, indicating that they had received this seal. So, that if they are applying for college, the college would be aware that this child had achieved biliteracy.

This is a great step that has been taken in some other states. I really think it would be a great step forward for Connecticut. This House Chamber took that step last year and, of course, things sometimes don't make it through the upper Chamber. I'm hoping that we can get the Bill through both Chambers this year. So, I hope all of my friends in the Chamber will join me in supporting passage of the measure before us. Thank you, Madam

ph  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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April 5, 2017

Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE (48TH):

Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further? Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD):

Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE (48TH):

Good afternoon.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD):

My seat did change. Thank you. This Bill should pass. I believe that in this country and in Connecticut, we really haven't dealt the due importance to competency in more than one language that we should. This Bill is simply an optional way for our schools to recognize that competency when a student has attained it in either a language other than English or American sign language, which we often forget about because learning another language and learning another culture and learning to think in another language is really a mind opener like none other.

So, I think that this is something that will help our schools understand the importance of biliteracy and bilingualism and will encourage our students to strive for that and it doesn't have a fiscal note and I think it's an all-around good thing to do. And I would encourage all of my colleagues to support it. I also thank the Commissioner for bringing this idea. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE (48TH):

Thank you, Madam. Will you care to remark further on the Bill before us? Will you care to remark further on the Bill before us? If not, staff and guests -- Representative Sampson.

REP. SAMPSON (80TH):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Forgive me, I was just very deeply engrossed in reading the language of the Bill. And I do certainly intend to plan on supporting it. I would just make a note that I'm not certain that this is the best way to go about making such a policy. Since we are essentially

giving the State Board of Education the authority to establish the criteria in which a local Board of Education can create this seal. I would much rather see my local Board of Education have the authority to do so. I think it's a laudable endeavor and for that reason I'm going to support it.

I would just caution us from in the future always going to a state level solution, when a local solution is more proper. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE (48TH):

Thank you, sir. Will you care to remark further on the Bill before us? Would you care to remark further on the Bill before us? If not, staff and guests please come to the well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be open.

CLERK:

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

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE (48TH):

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

CLERK:

House Bill No. 7159.

Total Number of Voting	145
Necessary for Passage	73
Those Voting Yea	145
Those Voting Nay	0
Absent and Not Voting	4

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE (48TH):

The Bill passes. (Gavel) Are there any announcements or introductions? Announcements or introductions? Representative Kupchick, my dear friend, you have the floor, Madam.

REP. KUPCHICK (132ND):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to be joined by my colleagues in the Senate



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Senate

May 25, 2017

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection. So ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. On calendar page 48, Calendar 44, House Bill 7309, I'd like to place that item on our Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection. So ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. On calendar page 19, Calendar 257, House Bill 7159, I'd like to place that item on our Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection. So ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. And to mark some items go, please.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. On calendar page 56, Calendar 325, Senate Bill 246, go. Calendar page

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Thank you, Madam President. If the clerk can now call the items on the Consent Calendar, followed by a vote of the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK:

On page 9, Calendar 115, Senate Bill 544, page 11, Calendar 130, Senate Bill 826. Page 13, Calendar 171, Senate Bill 35. Page 15, Calendar 198, Senate Bill 870. Page 16, Calendar 210, Senate Bill 835. Page 16, Calendar 215, Senate Bill 635. On page 17, Calendar 231, Senate Bill 605, and Calendar 233, Senate Bill 572. On page 19, Calendar 257, House Bill 7159. On page 21, Calendar 267, House Bill 7237.

On page 23, Calendar 289, Senate Bill 1038. On page 24, Calendar 300, Senate Bill 949. Page 26, Calendar 315, Senate Bill 1002. Page 30, Calendar 360, Senate Bill 1041. Page 35, Calendar 398, House Bill 6002. Also on page 35, Calendar 400, House Bill 7015. On page 36, Calendar 403, House Bill 7037. Page 43, Calendar 451, House Bill 7299. Page 48, Calendar 484, House Bill 7309. And on page 56, Calendar 325, Senate Bill 246.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, please call for a roll call vote. The machine will be open on the third Consent Calendar.

CLERK:

cf  
Senate

May 25, 2017

Immediate Roll Call has been ordered in the Senate on the third Consent Calendar for today. Immediate Roll Call in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Senator McCrory, wanna vote?

If all members have voted, all members have voted. The machine will be closed. Mr. Clerk, call the tally.

CLERK:

Consent Calendar No. 3.

Total number voting	36
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar's passed. (Gavel) At this time Senator -- Mr. Clerk, do you have anything on your desk? Senator Duff. I'm sorry.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I'll yield for points of personal privilege, please.

THE CHAIR:

Are there any points of personal privilege? Seeing none. Senator Duff.

**JOINT  
STANDING  
COMMITTEE  
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**EDUCATION  
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## PUBLIC HEARING

DIANA WENTZELL: Thank you. Thank you Senator Boucher, Representative Lavielle and members of the Education Committee. Good afternoon. I am Diana Wentzell, Commissioner of the Department of Education, and I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to testify before you regarding a series of important education-related proposals. You have my written testimony, so I'm gonna use this time to focus my comments on three bills, House Bill 7035, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING EDUCATION, Senate Bill 910, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, and House Bill 7159, AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S SEAL OF BILITERACY and of course answer any questions you have on any matters. We are supportive of the Governor's proposal, which makes significant changes to the distribution of educational funding. I've previously testified at length on this on a different committee and I'm happy to answer any questions on it, but I would like to reserve the time that I have and the few minutes to talk about our agency bill. So, Senate Bill 910, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. This is the department's bill and we are seeking your support. Section 1 of this removes in school suspension that are greater than half a day from the list of what is reported as an absence from school. While we understand the intent of the language that was passed a few years ago and agree completely with the sentiment that we should be moving away from all forms of exclusionary discipline. This provision in the law is unsafe for children. The identification of a student as absent transfers responsibility from the school to the parent or guardian. This provision confuses this delineation. For example,

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in an emergency situation, schools would not engage in efforts to locate students who are marked as absent. Furthermore, chronic absenteeism is one of the 12 indicators on our accountability index and counting students who are present as absent confuse our accountability data. Section 2 removes obsolete language that references the State Board of Education approval for Special Education facilities, which is no longer a function of a State Board, but is now a function of the Department of Administrative Services and we collaborate very nicely with our partners at DAS, so we'd like the language to conform to the practice. Section 3 restores a Praxis Core Waiver provision that we believe was inadvertently removed from statute last year. This technical change would restore that waiver provision for individuals who historically have been exempt from taking Praxis Core based on other assessment that they've taken, such as the SAT, ACT, or GRE, and we now use Praxis Core as a diagnostic tool. Section 4 removes obsolete language that refers to certificates of qualification which are no longer issued by the department and section 5-7 make conforming changes to statute based on the removal of that language. Section 8 removes language requiring a four-year baccalaureate teacher preparation program in order to acquire an initial certificate. The department has had several issues arise in the last year, where highly qualified individuals with equivalent or in some cases, much higher levels of education than a Bachelor's degree were denied certification because they did not complete four-year programs. They subsequently needed a commissioner level override which is outlined in regulation in order to gain certification. We recognize that the specific

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language may need to be adjusted to accomplish the intended goal and we're ready to work with you to make that happen. Section 9 removes old language which refers to beginning educator support and training program theft, which 90-day certificate holders were once required to participate in. The BEST program has since been replaced by the teacher education and mentoring or TEEN Program and that only applies to initial certificate holders and not 90 days. Section 10 removes an April 15th data collection requirement for REQs to submit to the department regarding an estimate of available seats for the following year. We actually are able to collect this information directly from our public school information system now, which is more accurate, so this collection is no longer necessary. Section 11, you are familiar with a yearly submission that allows the department to pay the supplemental magnet transportation grant to crack and Section 12 requires the statewide high school science examination to be administered in grade 11, rather than grade 10. When the State Board of Education adopted the next generation science standards this past Fall, it increased the required amount of science being taught in our schools. If the test were to remain in grade 10, students will not have been taught all of the necessary science curriculum, which is why a shift to grade 11 is necessary at this time. The department would also like to remove the requirement for the test to only be administered in March or April to allow flexibility at the local level for districts to administer it in May or June, as well as they choose, and then thank you for indulging me. House Bill 7159, AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S SEAL OF BILITERACY. This language would allow a



superintendent to affix a seal on the diploma or the transcript of the student who has demonstrated a high level proficiency in English and another language. It's purpose is to recognize students who have realized this significant achievement of being biliterate and provide employers and colleges of another means of easily identifying these students. If tasked, Connecticut will join, I believe it's 24 other States. We had 22 in the testimony and I spoke with someone this morning, it's 24 other States, so we would be the 25th, who've adopted similar legislation and we are in strong support.

REP. BOUCHER (26TH): Thank you for your testimony. I assure that there's probably questions. Do we have any individuals? Representative Gail Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Commissioner good afternoon.

DIANA WENTZELL: Good afternoon.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Good to see you as always. Thank you very much for your detailed testimony. We've talked about the Department's bill and I don't have any questions for you on that and as always, thank you for your advocacy on the Seal of Biliteracy. I do have some questions for you on the Governor's bill. First off, one of the factors that you discuss regarding ECS is the impact of poverty and the Governor's bill shifts the criteria for students that count to determine the poverty level from those who receive free and reduced lunch to those on Husky, I think it's Husky A. I wondered what you thought of the effect of that? I have a concern. I'll tell you what it is and then you tell me what you think about that. We have some districts in the State that have seen actually some increasing enrollment, although lots of them have

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oversight for those higher education programs, particularly the Ed Prep programs and then also for the students supports component of the Office of Higher Ed by aligning to our student support component in the department. We feel as though it will help us focus on our college and career readiness goals through better program alignment, and then also the scholarships that they oversee, being able to really make sure that our K-12 districts are very aware and make sure that we're promoting those to the kids that can benefit and that need them the most.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you very much commissioner. Thanks for your testimony.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Thank you so much. As you can tell, there's a great deal of interest in the briefest part of your presentation, which has to do with the Governor's proportion of the Education budget and we do have a number of speakers, so we're gonna try to hold hopefully the questions and the answers as brief as possible, as we're still on the first page of quite a lengthy five-page list of testifiers today, so with that being said, Representative Johnson, followed by Representative McCarty, followed by Representative Cook and should I say Representative McCrory or is it Senator McCrory today, is a new day? Very good, thank you. Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Thank you so much Madam Chair and thank you Commissioner for your testimony today and I first wanna say how pleased I am to see the proposal for the Act concerning the Connecticut Seal of Biliteracy. I think that's a wonderful move in the right direction for our State, so thank you for

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proposing that. Also I'd like to just follow-up and ask in terms of your vision for the next two years and the recent passage of the Every Child Succeeds Act on the Federal level, how are we doing in terms of coordinating the aspect of bilingual education with what Connecticut is doing?

DIANA WENTZELL: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to that. As a result of widespread stakeholder engagement in preparation for the development of our ESSA plan, one of the areas of concern that really came to the forefront for our State is that of the education of our English learners. For that reason, we chose that as one of our three goals, that the department has really focused our energy on in our ESSA plan and as a matter of fact, our State board is considering our ESSA plan draft very likely as we speak on the other side of town, but that focus on English learners and better education in all classrooms for English learners is something that was widely supported in our stakeholder feedback and that we got a lot of very specific feedback on as well.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): And just quickly, how does that--how do you deal with the testing for students that are in the process of learning English proficiency with respect--I don't know as it speaks to that specifically, but I think that's a crucial problem.

DIANA WENTZELL: Yes, thank you. As it does speak to it specifically, as a matter of fact, the one area for corrective feedback that we had early in the process was that Connecticut needed to hold ourselves more accountable for the learning for our English learners and including the testing, so we

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have moved for English learners in more rigorous assessment and we did that three years ago. The lost link C, which is more aligned to academic standards, so that's our English language learner assessment that helps us know what level of English proficiency English learner have achieved and then English learners also take the State assessments and our smarter balanced assessment because it is computer delivered, can translate fully into a number of languages, not all the languages we serve in Connecticut, but wherever it doesn't change the construct of the question, where it doesn't basically give away the answer, it can either through written words or voice to text, you know talk to the kid and help the kid access the test in their own language. We don't have that level of sophistication on our science assessments or on our high school assessment however.

REP. JOHNSON (49TH): Well thank you so much for that. Thank you for your work and thank you Madam Chair.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Thank you very much. Now we have Representative McCarty.

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you Madam Chair and welcome Commissioner and thank you for your testimony today. I'm gonna confine my remarks to your testimony that you put forward. On Section 12, I know we recently tried to reduce the amount of testing in the junior year, so could you just comment, and I understand why and I appreciate giving the flexibility to the district to test in 11th grade, but to go over to the end of the school year, if possible, but do you see that as a permanent situation or if districts are able to

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teacher as much as necessary in the science curriculum during the year, that that could be also back to the 10th grade or do you see it as permanent and then just a quick comment, I'm also very, very pleased to see the Seal of Biliteracy as a former foreign language teacher. I think it's a great move and I thank you for that.

DIANA WENTZELL: Thank you and thank you for your question. Yes, we did make a big change in the year before last to move away from the Smarter Balance Assessment in 11th grade, which took up about seven hours of testing to the SAT, which only takes about three hours of testing, so we are really pleased to reduce the State task to three hours in 11th grade, and this will add more testing to 11th grade. The science standards, as well as the high school graduation requirements that are coming will require likely three years of science, however we are exploring with CAPSS accountability, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents has an accountability and assessment working group that we collaborate really closely with and we are continuing to explore how much flexibility we can give in when students take the State assessment and have it count for accountability. We are also obviously in a new phase of our relationship with the federal government in the USED, so we'll see how much we're allowed to do, but we will continue to explore flexibility, so for instance if a student were ready--the question we get frequently is if a student were ready earlier, could they take the test in 10th grade or could somebody wait until 12th grade and our worry about 12th grade is if the local district links it to graduation, then they won't have a chance to make it up, because we can only

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someone's Senior year and if things didn't go well, there'd be time for retesting?

DIANA WENTZELL: We wouldn't be able to re-test, so secure State assessments require some limited assessment span, so the ability to re-test is a tougher thing and I'm not sure we could have a window for assessment, that was the whole year and maintain adequate test security, even with the newer assessments that are computerized and we are moving to computerized assessments for the Science test, but I do think that looking at the 12th grade year and depending on how then the interaction was with graduation could be possible and we are exploring with CAPS. CAPS has an accountability and assessment subcommittee that works really close with us at the department and advises us on these matters and we are looking at how much flexibility we can give in the assessments and also of course looking at our interaction with USED, because our assessment plan will still need to meet those criteria.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18TH): Thanks, that's helpful and I think we will talk more about that, but I appreciate your answers on that. I also wanted to thank you for the positive testimony you gave in support of the bill on gifted and talented students and the Bill on the Seal of Biliteracy, the cords who are working with you to get those and other bills passed. Thank you.

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DIANA WENTZELL: Thank you.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Thank you Chairman Fleischmann and if there are no other questions by the committee, we thank you for all the time you spent with us Commissioner.

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are in most need. I tried to get it done very quickly for you.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): You certainly did, thank you so very much. Does anyone on this committee have energy left to ask a few other questions this evening. After all, you did get some pizza right, so that should give you a little bit more of those carbs to help out at the end of the day. Anyone? No, it doesn't look like it. You're safe. Ready to go. Thank you so much. Have a safe drive home now. Very good. Okay, we're onto House Bill 7159, AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S SEAL OF BILITERACY. I think we did have our Commissioner weigh in on that for sure. We have Leah and Granner Kennedy or Brian Dales. Okay, looks like they went home for the evening. Good, very good. Who do we have here tonight?

BRIAN DALES: Good evening and other members of the Education Committee, good evening to you as well. My name is Brian Dales.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Great to see you Brian. Thank you.

BRIAN DALES: Thank you so much for your patience and your endurance this evening. It has been a long day for everyone, so thank you very much for your hard work and stamina. My name is Brian Dales and I am the Director of World Languages for Hartford Public Schools. I'm here to express my support of Bill 7159, AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S SEAL OF BILITERACY. As a graduate of Connecticut Public Schools and as a language education professional, it is my opinion that the Connecticut Seal of Biliteracy will benefit all learners who choose to pursue it.

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This seal represents high expectations for student achievement, validation of proficiency in first and subsequent languages, as well as college and career readiness with respect to competence. In Hartford, where our students collectively speak over 80 languages and we educate almost 4,000 English learners, our Department of English Language Learner services and Department of World Languages share a vision of bilingualism and biliteracy in which all Hartford Public School students graduate proficient in their first language as well as at least one other, whether that is English or another language.

We recognize as an asset the language skills our students bring from other countries and their linguistically diverse homes. We promote as an asset to our Anglophone students the ability to communicate effectively in languages other than English. The Seal of Biliteracy exceeds the standard documentation of a high school transcript in that the Seal affirms language proficiency rather than seat time completed in classrooms. Students capable of earning the Seal of Biliteracy can prove their ability to communicate for real world purposes in a variety of context.

As we progress further into the 21st century, no conversations concerning cultural confidence, global citizenship, college and career readiness, 21st century skills and the like can ignore the value of linguistic proficiency holds in the successful pursuit of such goals. For many years, we have known the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism. Now, we cannot deny the social, economic, and political benefits language learning bestows. Please express your support of all



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Connecticut language learners through your support of Bill 7159. Thank you for your consideration.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Oh that was perfect, perfect, perfect. As a very former, way, way, way back foreign language teacher, I really appreciate your comments. Do we have any other sentiments? Yes, our distinguished Co-Chair, Senator Slossberg.

SEN. SLOSSBERG (14TH): Thank you Madam Chairwoman and thank you for being here and for staying so late and I do just wanna share with you that this is a proposal that the committee put forward last year as well and was by and large very supportive of and unfortunately just a way with some of the functions of the manner of which bills go through the legislature, did not get through the process, which is why we've put this in a separate bill that could be hopefully ushered through in its own happy way, because it's something that we really think is a terrific thing. I wanted to ask you if I may, a second off the Seal of Biliteracy, seeing as you being a World Language teacher, whether what your thoughts were on this? Do you believe that in your school system, so you're in the Hartford School system, if your high school graduation requirements did not include some sort of language, foreign language, do you think that your school system would continue to support it?

BRIAN DALES: I do believe to, absolutely and I think speaking strictly from Hartford, we believe that the first students who would benefit from the Seal of Biliteracy are actually our English Language Learners, because they come to us proficient in a language other than English already. We do a little bit of first language support. We are able to offer

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in some cases native Spanish classes, Spanish language arts for native speakers because we do believe in continuing that first language development, so I do believe that we would still have a language program district-wide and I would also venture to say that there are students that are interested in studying languages that we don't currently teach and if we could offer them, I think we would expand in that direction as well.

SEN. SLOSSBERG (14TH): That's terrific and I think that's an exciting area that I think we should be including in all of our curriculums, but we are trying to figure out a whole bunch of different things and I wanna make sure that we are supporting teaching our students different languages. To me, it's something that I think we should be doing it when kids are little, when we know actually language is developing, it would probably go a lot easier than having one language until the time you are further along in your education. It's harder for you to figure that out so, so thank you for your indulgence and I appreciate it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Don't go far. We still have another question from Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVEILLE (143RD): Yes, but I won't keep you very long. We've been here long enough. I am not able to conceive of endorsing any set of requirements that would not include at least another language, and at least several years of it. I can't, I just can't. I just wanted to tell you that.

BRIAN DALES: Thank you and that supports what we know from research. It takes time to develop

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proficiency and when we're talking about earning a Seal of Biliteracy, we need to have in place those long sequences/courses, particularly for our Anglophone students who are learning another language. In that respect our EL's actually have an advantage. They come to us proficient in another language and now they're in an immersive setting in English and the reverse is not true for our English-speaking students, so we do need to promote this study starting from an early age, get those long sequences in and hit those proficiency benchmarks.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): It never ceases to amaze me how far Americans are behind the rest of the world in learning another language. It's the only developed place I've ever seen this kind of thing and I also appreciate your remarks about valorizing the fact that people do have another language. We have tended as a culture to downplay the importance of someone coming here and having that in their background. I mean they need to learn to speak English if they're gonna be here, but the fact that they have another language is an asset and not a disadvantage.

BRIAN DALES: Absolutely, it's not a deficit and we can leverage that in their learning of English as well.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Anyway, thank you very much for coming and giving us your point of view.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Thank you very much and since you're here, I'm not gonna let you get away with answering a question that is nagging us because not on this topic actually, but a concern about graduation requirement credit hours, because that's a raging debate as well and we put that off year

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after year. The issue is do you prescribe or do you take off the handcuffs and let them do what they will, you know a school system? You know prescribe a set number of credit hours like 95 or say you know you must have one credit in the arts, you must have one foreign language credit, etc. The concern I have is that years gone by, 20 years ago, the Hartford School system was in deep financial trouble and they eliminated all music and arts programs in the entire district. Do you feel that if there wasn't a requirement that that could potentially happen again in the future?

BRIAN DALES: For across those elective areas or specifically world languages?

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): No across those elective areas.

BRIAN DALES: I would hope not.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): You don't have to answer it if you're not comfortable with answering it.

BRIAN DALES: No, I mean I feel passionately about all of those areas. It's not just world languages, I grew up as a musician as well, so you know I'm strongly in support of those areas. I would hate to see those disappear for financial reasons and we did subsequent to the loss 20 years ago, spent a great deal of effort in rebuilding programming through that 2006, '8, '10, those years, so hopefully it will stay.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Good, good, I can understand your concern about saying anything really definitive in that, but again that conversation will be ongoing for sure. Thank you again for spending so much time. Hopefully you will have enough time to get up

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in the morning and go back to school. Thank you. We have one more moment. Can we pull you back one more moment? We have another very, very curious State Representative, Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I know we've all stayed up late and everybody wants to go home, but I have to tell you this. I totally appreciate everything you're saying. I have several granddaughters and one grandson and one of my granddaughters lives in Milton, two of them live in Milton, Mass and she was lucky enough as a Kindergartener for her mother to pick the option that she would do her first five years of schools only in French, and now as a teenager, I compare her to my other granddaughters, in how much more successful she's being in going to different languages now as she's getting older and what an opportunity. I don't we have anything like that in Connecticut, but boy this Milton program is just amazing and I'm looking forward to her little sister starting it next year.

BRIAN DALES: There are some districts that do have some immersion or dual language programming.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): In Connecticut?

BRIAN DALES: Yes, probably every city but Hartford I think has some form of Immersion or dual language programming, so it exists.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Well we appreciate your testimony and everything you said tonight. Thank you.

BRIAN DALES: Thank you so much.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): And Representative McCarty.

## PUBLIC HEARING

REP. MCCARTY (38TH): Thank you very much Madam Chair. I'm a World Language teacher and did have that experience where I was taught in a foreign language early on the first elementary grades, so I really valued the importance of World Language study and I think one aspect of this Seal of Biliteracy that we did not mention is that I think students that will graduate with that seal will also be more attractive to employers and to the colleges going forward, so I'd just like to point that out and I'm a strong advocate and supporter of this bill, so thank you.

BRIAN DALES: Thank you so much.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): I think we are finally concluding, correct? It's always a pleasure to hear from every single one of these committee members that we have because they are always able to contribute something of really value and I mean that sincerely. Okay, next on our list, we have House HB 7159 Bill 7155, Ray Rossamondo. Hello Leah.

LEAH KENNEDY: Thank you so much. This is truly an act of endurance. I feel like you guys are running marathons through the night. This is amazing. Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, ranking member Representative Lavielle and all of the members who have been so kind to stay here all night. I've been tweeting and posting to Facebook that you are truly the ones that will help us solve these really difficult questions in education. You have been asking really thoughtful questions all day and I applaud you for that, especially if we get this far into the night. Thank you. Sincere thanks. I am Leah Granier Kennedy.

## PUBLIC HEARING

I'm coming to you as a language teacher, a coordinator of languages at Stonington Public Schools and also as President-Elect of the Connecticut Organization of Language Teachers. I know by your comment and by your professions that you are in favor of the fields on literacy. I was able to have the wonderful opportunity to come to you last year and I thank you for taking time again this year, so I'm not going to share too much about the field, because it seems that is something that is very clearly understood here, but as Commissioner Wentzel testified this morning, she shared that this would be good for both our EL students and for our World Language students and I think this will be something that will be a real asset to our students moving forward. If you look at the testimonial that have already been posted, you'll see many of my students from Stonington High School.

The students are wildly excited about this. This is something that they are thrilled to have the recognition for, as they move forward. The only way that we're gonna be able to get these fields attached to both the transcript and to the graduation diploma is if they take an external assessment, so in Stonington, we're under 800 students, so we are testing Seniors this year and we're the district that is doing the pilot for the State of Connecticut, so we had 51 students who were able to take the external assessment. They paid for them themselves and it's a \$20 four-part test that assesses the reading, writing, speaking, and listening capabilities in another language and 51 of them, the graduating class is under 200, will have the Seal of Biliteracy on their diploma this Summer, so we are thrilled about that and we now have data

## PUBLIC HEARING

we'll be starting to track and I am, as Brian Dales said, on the work group that has been put together by the commissioner and by her Chief Academic Office Isabellina Rodriquez, so we are meeting with stakeholders from the EL community, from the American Sign Language Community. We have a really nice group of people who are coming together to support this effort.

The main thing that we need to recognize is this shift in pedagogy and the shift towards proficiency. That is really the crux of this. The whole point is to get these kids having functional communicative language skills. Last week I was able to spend a few days in D.C. working with our Federal legislators in order to convince them of the support for this and we saw that there was great support from our Connecticut representatives, so I'm open to any questions and look forward to doing anything I can do to support you in your efforts.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Well the level of energy that both you and your colleague have displayed, certainly the State has made wise choices in this area, so anyone on the committee feel that they would like to ask a question. I think you did just a superb job, you've left everyone speechless. Thank you.

LEAH KENNEDY: Well, thank you so much. I appreciate it. And just yesterday the American Academy, the AAAS report came out, so if you'd like to see that online, they have some wonderful findings about language research, so thank you very much.

SEN. BOUCHER (26TH): Okay, very good. Now we can move on to House Bill 7155, AN ACT REQUIRING OFFICE





**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
**STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



Connecticut General Assembly  
Education Committee  
Testimony of Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell  
March 1, 2017

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher, Representative Lavielle and members of the Education Committee, I am Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner of the Department of Education, and I am pleased to have an opportunity to testify before you today regarding a series of important education-related proposals.

**S.B. 711, An Act Increasing The Amount A School District May Reduce Its Minimum Budget Requirement When It Experiences A Decline In Student Enrollment**

The Department is not in favor of this proposal. The Governor's education implementer proposes modifications to the minimum budget requirement (MBR) for the biennium, which provides districts with relief that is directly responsive to the reductions that most will be receiving in education aid. It also directs the Department to propose a replacement to the MBR for fiscal year 2019. In light of this, additional budget reduction allowances in response to declining enrollment, would not only be particularly onerous when combined with the state's reduction in aid, but also unnecessary as it will be changing in a year.

**S.B. 911, An Act Concerning Services For Gifted And Talented Students**

This proposal would require an employee of the Department of Education to be responsible for providing information and assistance to school districts and to the public relating to gifted and talented students. It also requires the Department of Education to develop guidelines regarding best practices in the provision of services to gifted and talented students. We are in favor of this proposal and already have an employee who is responsible for this work. Having said that, it will take time and additional resources to develop the guidelines that are being proposed.

**H.B. 7035, An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education**

We are supportive of the Governor's proposal, which makes significant changes for the distribution of education funding. The Governor's proposed changes to Education Cost Sharing (ECS), focus on three key areas: 1) the impact of poverty; 2) the ability to pay; and 3) utilizing current enrollment. The Governor has also renewed his commitment to special education by separating that funding from general education aid, combining it with the Excess Cost – Special Education grant and adding an additional 10 million dollars. All of these changes will help to create a more transparent and equitable approach, which will better serve all of our students.

This proposal maintains current funding for Alliance Districts. This continued investment reaffirms our commitment to revitalizing high-need districts, which impact 200,000 students, at more than 400 schools in 30 districts across our state. The Governor's proposed budget also maintains funding for the Commissioner's Network schools, which represent a pledge between local stakeholders and the Department to dramatically improve student achievement in up to 25 schools.

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Under the proposed budget, the Department will see a reduction of \$3.35 million in our personal services line item. That includes a \$1.7 million dollar transfer, which represents the reassignment of a number of staff from our Department to the Connecticut Technical High School System central office. These are staff members who are currently employed by the Department, but who presently work to support CTHSS. We believe this transfer of Department staff will assist the efforts being undertaken by Speaker Aresimowicz, and other members of the General Assembly, to move to a strong, independent and sustainable Connecticut Technical High School System.

This budget proposal consolidates similar programming into singular line items which will support the Department's work in a more coordinated and flexible manner. The Department will take the opportunity to evaluate the consolidated programs and determine the best, most efficient way to align the delivery of the dollars in a way that maximizes services for children. Similarly, our proposed consolidation with the Office of Higher Education will allow us to partner closely with them to share resources and continue to align the K-12 system with postsecondary education to increase levels of college and career readiness.

#### **S.B. 910, An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Department Of Education**

This is the Department's bill and we are seeking your support. **Section 1** removes in-school suspensions that are greater than half a day from the list of what is considered an absence from school. While we understand the intent of the language passed a few years ago, and agree with the sentiment that we should be moving away from all forms of exclusionary discipline, this provision in the law is bad policy on multiple levels and is unsafe for children. The identification of a student as absent, transfers responsibility from the school to the parent or guardian. This provision confuses this delineation. For example, in emergency situations, schools would not engage in efforts to locate students marked as absent. Furthermore, chronic absenteeism is also one of the 12 indicators on our Accountability Index and counting students who are present as absent skews our accountability data.

**Section 2** simply removes obsolete language that references State Board of Education approval for special education facilities. The approval of facilities and all things relating to school construction are responsibilities that were transferred to the Department of Administrative Services several years ago and are no longer a function of the State Board.

**Section 3** restores a waiver provision that we believe was inadvertently removed from statute last year. During the previous legislative session, a change was made that removes the requirement to pass Praxis Core in order to gain entry into a teacher preparation program and become certified to teach in Connecticut. In doing so, language allowing individual waivers from having to take the test, which will now be used as a diagnostic tool if a certain score was met on the SAT, ACT or GRE was inadvertently removed from statute. This technical change would restore the waiver provision for individuals who would have historically been exempt from taking the exam.

**Section 4** removes obsolete language that refers to certificates of qualification, which are no longer issued by the Department. **Sections 5-7** make conforming changes to statute based on the removal of that language.

**Section 8** removes language requiring a 4-year baccalaureate teacher preparation program in order to acquire an initial certificate. The Department has had several issues arise in the last year where highly

qualified individuals with equivalent – and in some cases much higher – levels of education than a Bachelor's degree were denied certification because they did not complete four year programs. They subsequently needed a Commissioner level override, which is outlined in regulation, in order for them to gain certification. We recognize that the specific language may need to be adjusted to accomplish the intended goal and are ready to work with you to make that happen.

**Section 9** removes old language that refers to the Beginning Educator Support & Training Program (BEST), which 90-day certificate holders were once required to take. The BEST program has since been replaced by the Teacher Education and Mentoring Program or TEAM Program, which only applies to initial certificate holders and not 90-day certificate holders.

**Section 10** removes an April 15th data collection requirement for RESCs to submit to the Department regarding an estimate of available seats for the following year. We are able to collect this information directly from our Public School Information System (PSIS) data, which is more accurate, so this collection is not necessary.

**Section 11** is a yearly submission that allows the Department to pay the Supplemental Magnet Transportation Grant to the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) to cover the costs associated with transporting students in the Hartford area in support of the Sheff initiative. The current Sheff reimbursement rate for magnet transportation is two thousand dollars per pupil, when the actual cost is between four and five thousand dollars per pupil. Pursuant to the Sheff stipulated agreement requiring the Department to have a regional transportation system, we contract with CREC to act as administrator for the system. Under the current agreement, we must seek legislation in order to pay CREC the difference. Without this correction, there will be a significant deficit in the funding necessary to provide adequate transportation.

**Section 12** requires the statewide high school science examination to be administered in Grade 11 rather than Grade 10. When the State Board of Education adopted the Next Generation Science Standards this fall it increased the required amount of science being taught in schools. If the test were to remain in Grade 10, students will not have been taught all of the necessary science curriculum, which is why a shift to Grade 11 is necessary at this time. The Department would also like to remove the requirement for the test to only be administered in March or April, to allow flexibility for districts to administer it in May or June as well.

#### **H.B. 7159, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Seal Of Bilingualism**

This language would allow a superintendent to affix a seal on the diploma or transcript of a student who has demonstrated a high level of proficiency in English and another language. Its purpose is to recognize students who have realized the significant achievement of being biliterate and provide employers and colleges with another means of easily identifying them. If passed, Connecticut will join 22 other states who have adopted similar legislation and we are in strong support.

#### **S.B. 913, An Act Concerning School Paraprofessional Training**

At this time the Department is not in favor of any increase in training mandates for districts. Over the summer and throughout the fall our staff participated in a legislatively created task force that studied the 106 hours (or 13 days) of statutorily required training and made several recommendations for

DATE: February 28, 2017  
TO: State of Connecticut, General Assembly  
Education Committee  
FROM: Lea Graner Kennedy, President-Elect CT COLT on behalf of,  
The Connecticut Council of Language Teachers (CT COLT)  
RE: Public Testimony Regarding H.B. 7159, An Act Concerning  
Connecticut's Seal Of Biliteracy



Members of the Education Committee – thank you for this opportunity to give my testimony. My name is Lea Graner Kennedy and I am representing the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers to speak in full support of the Seal of Biliteracy described in Bill #7159. We are a group of over 800 world language teachers representing all areas of the State of Connecticut.

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award made by a state department of education or local district to recognize a student who has attained proficiency in one or more other world languages in addition to English by high school graduation. The recognition of attaining biliteracy becomes part of the high school transcript and diploma for these students. 24 states have already adopted the Seal of Biliteracy and many more are considering the legislation. As a group of educators who understand the importance of biliteracy to success in college, career, and life, we are thrilled that the Commissioner and the State Board of Education proposed this legislation and that the Education Committee has included it in Bill 7159.

The Seal of Biliteracy benefits both students who arrive in our schools with second language ability and our students who are learning a world language for the first time in our classrooms. It encourages *all* students to pursue proficiency in at least one language other than their native language and rewards students for their *level of proficiency* or mastery of a language, rather than focusing on how many years they have studied it. As a result, it will focus school districts and teachers on the development of student language *proficiency* as a driving principle behind high quality EL and world languages curriculum and instruction. In addition, it will promote the development of *biliteracy*, in which students develop academic reading and writing skills in addition to their speaking and listening skills. The Seal of Biliteracy on a student's high school diploma will show universities and potential employers that a student has the ability to effectively communicate with people from two or more languages and cultures, both orally and in writing - certainly a key 21st Century Skill.

The Seal also has the potential to help to establish norms around language proficiency requirements of colleges and employers. Because students' "foreign language" proficiency will be measured by a set of nationally accepted proficiency guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; K-12 school systems, universities, and businesses will be able to engage in discussions about their language needs, all using the common language of "proficiency" levels. In Europe, this has been the case for many years: job postings often include a defined proficiency level in the job description. For our students to

become globally competitive, we must begin to support a K-16 vision for language learners. Our students will benefit from language programs as well as the reward for increased proficiency offered by the new State Seal of Biliteracy movement.

As an organization, we look forward to assisting in any way we can with implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy and we are actively researching reliable measures, and other details of implementation with our colleagues from around the nation. Thank you again for your consideration of this exciting legislation and if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to ask.

For more information:

Learn more about the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers at <http://www.ctcolt.org/pages/welcome.asp>

Learn about implementation of the Seal across the United States at <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/>