

Testimony of

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Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

HB 6880 An Act Concerning Assorted Revisions to the Education Statutes

March 15, 2023

Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, and members of this esteemed committee. I am Kate Dias, the president of the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents educators in more than 150 school districts across the state.

CEA supports certain sections of HB 6880, opposes others, and requests a technical revision be added to this or another suitable bill.

Technical Revision Request

CEA requests that the Education Committee include what we believe is a technical revision to CGS 10-156b.

On June 28, 2022, the communities and voters of Goshen, Litchfield, Morris, and Warren approved the creation of a new school district - Region 20. The new district is a merger of an existing municipal district and an existing regional district that will go into effect on July 1, 2024. However, 10-156b, which addresses the transition of teachers from existing school districts to their new merged district, did not contemplate merging a local board of education with a regional board of education. Consequently, in order to treat the new Region 20 the same as other regional school districts, the words "or regional" need to be added to CGS 10-156b as follows:

*Sec. 10-156b. (a) In determining the rights and benefits earned by a teacher under section 10-151 and section 10-156, the establishment of a regional school district shall not be deemed to interrupt the continuous employment of a teacher who was employed by a local **or regional** board of education of any of the towns comprising such district during the school year immediately prior to, or within which, such district is established, and such teacher shall continue as an employee of the regional board of education, subject to the provisions of section 10-151.*

The Connection Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, and the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) jointly support this critical revision to ensure a smooth transition for Regional School District No. 20.

Posting Instructional Materials

CEA opposes section 1 of this bill, which includes onerous requirements for posting all instructional materials onto websites. This task would be incredibly time-consuming and passed down to teachers who are already struggling to find enough time in the week to complete all that needs to be done to support learning. It will reduce creativity and could diminish the educational experience. To accomplish this goal, teachers would have to dedicate their already limited time to the tasks of posting materials. This would not be a good or meaningful use of staff time. To be clear, we believe in supporting parent participation and understanding of curriculum and encourage families to engage in the governance of their local schools through their boards of education.

Remote Instruction

CEA opposes section 5, which would permit remote learning for students who are unable to attend school due to a medical condition or who choose not to obtain required vaccinations. Currently, there is a system of homebound instruction for students with medical conditions. This system provides in-person instruction and home visits. The effect of section 5 would be to essentially establish virtual schooling – an idea that has been problematic in other states where it has been tried.

We oppose virtual K-12 instruction because of the disparate and negative impacts it has shown to have on student learning. We not only believe that in-person instruction at the K-12 level is always preferable to remote instruction, [Connecticut's Remote Learning Commission](#) established in PA 21-2 (Sec. 387) after extensive review from a wide scope of stakeholders, determined that the idea of a state-controlled remote learning school was not a good one. The commission provided the following recommendations:

Feasibility of Creating a K-12 State-Controlled Remote Learning School

The Remote Learning Commission recommends that a statewide remote learning school that serves students in grades kindergarten to 12, inclusive, does not have the ability to meet the expectations for teaching and learning, instruction, assessment, and accommodations with wrap-around supports to students and families.

Adequate Support Services

- 1. The Remote Learning Commission recommends that a statewide remote learning school that serves students in grades kindergarten to 12, inclusive, does not have the ability to provide options to ensure that students who are receiving or participating in remote*

learning have adequate parental or adult supervision, educational support, technical assistance, continuity of attendance, and engagement.

Fiscal Impact of Remote Learning

1. *The Remote Learning Commission recommends refraining from embarking on the process of establishing a full-time comprehensive, statewide remote learning school that serves students in grades kindergarten to 12, inclusive, at this time due to the projected annual cost of \$576,396,770.*

School Vouchers

CEA opposes Section 6, which calls for a study of school vouchers. Whether called a voucher, tax credit scholarship, education savings account, or money follows the child initiative, programs like this are handouts to wealthy taxpayers that decimate public education. Here is what concepts like tax credit scholarships and vouchers do.

Promote segregation: This type of program was conceived of as a way to circumvent *Brown v. Board of Education* and subsidize the cost of White parents sending their children to private schools with controlled enrollment policies.

Starve public schools of funds: These programs drain resources from public schools by reducing the amount of revenue available to fund ECS, special education, and other key programs that support local schools.

Falsely promote choice: These programs subsidize wealthy families who can already afford private education. They do not help low-income families who do not have the income to pay additional tuition costs out of pocket or who don't have tax liability sufficient to benefit from the credit. In fact, half of all school vouchers go to families making in excess of \$200,000.¹

Cause a decline in academic achievement: Numerous studies have shown that vouchers don't improve academic achievement and, in many cases, result in worse achievement. Studies of long-standing programs in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C., show no improvement in reading and math. Studies of programs in Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio showed decreases in academic performance.²

¹ [Half of private school voucher tax credits go to families making above \\$200K](#)

² See: R. Joseph Waddington & Mark Berends, [Impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program: Achievement Effects for Students in Upper Elementary & Middle School](#), 37 *J. of Policy Analysis & Mgmt.* 4, 738-808 (Aug. 2018); Atila Abdulkadiroğlu, Parag A. Pathak, & Christopher R. Walters, [Free to Choose: Can School Choice Reduce Student Achievement?](#), 10 *Am. Econ. Journal: Applied Econ.* 1, 175-206 (Jan. 2018); David Figlio & Krzysztof Karbownik, [Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, & Performance Effects](#), *Fordham Inst.* (July 2016); U.S. Dep't of Educ., [Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Two Years After Students Applied](#) (June 2018); Megan Kuhfeld, et al., [The Pandemic Has Had Devastating Impacts on Learning. What Will It Take to Help Students Catch Up?](#), *Brookings Inst.* (Mar. 3, 2022), as cited in *NCPE Opposing Private School Vouchers: A toolkit for Legislators and Advocates*, (Feb. 2023).

Subsidize wealthy families and corporations: Only those with significant tax liability (and therefore significant income) can benefit. Some programs are structured to provide the benefit to corporations or a third-party pass-through entity. In the end, it is the same shift of resources from those in need to the wealthy.

Reduce transparency and public oversight: Where programs like this have been implemented, little oversight has followed, resulting in fraud and profiteering. Additionally, public funds are redirected to schools without public oversight or elected school boards. In some cases, they are redirected to sectarian schools resulting in the state subsidizing religious perspectives in violation of the separation of church and state.

Let us truly consider the states that have successfully entered the voucher arena and ask ourselves if we really want Connecticut mentioned in the same breath?

Child Nutrition

CEA supports the provisions in the bill promoting nutrition, which is instrumental in promoting children's brain development and ensuring students are prepared for learning each day.

Parent and Teacher Advisory Councils

CEA supports proposals elevating the voice of students, teachers, and parents in discussions that affect schools.

Section 9 of this bill and HB 6884 provide for a teacher advisory council to ensure that the State Department of Education hears teachers' perspectives. The State Board of Education (CSDE) includes non-voting student members. We would support providing an avenue for teacher and parent voices with the CSDE proposal in HB 6884 and section 9 of this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.