



Senate Bill 5

An Act Concerning School Resources

Testimony of Mark Raymond

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Education Committee

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Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Mark Raymond, and I serve as the State Chief Information Officer and Chair the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology.

The Commission is empowered by the General Assembly through CGS § 61a to envision, coordinate, and oversee the management and successful integration of technology in Connecticut's schools, libraries, colleges and universities. The Commission includes 24 members appointed to represent those key stakeholder groups as well as members of the private sector with expertise in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI).

In its role as the State's policy advisor on educational technology, the Commission recently designed and released Connecticut's [2024 – 2028 State Educational Technology Plan](https://www.ct.gov/EdTech) (see [www.CT.gov/EdTech](https://www.ct.gov/EdTech)). Several sections of that plan, informed by the diversity of stakeholders who serve on the Commission and its advisory councils, address the use of AI in educational settings. This work includes advocacy for the development of skills by students, teachers, and education leaders on the choice and use of technology tools, including those that leverage AI (Goal 3.1). The plan also addresses ongoing measures to protect the privacy and security of data through all types of educational technology software (Goal 5.1). While the Commission has just begun work in implementing the five-year plan, it has already communicated best practices in the use of AI tools to districts and facilitated the sharing of resources among districts.

Given the current role, composition, and policy recommendations, the Commission is well positioned to facilitate the process of identifying needs and resources to support the integration of AI in Connecticut schools and universities. The following recommendations follow conversations with state leaders from the Connecticut State Department of Education, the Connecticut Education Association, and other groups. With these points as context, I have the following specific points to make regarding sections 2 and 3 of SB 5:

- **Scope of AI Use:** The State Educational Technology Plan identifies a number of areas where large language models and other forms of AI may have an impact. As SB 5 acknowledges, this includes the use of tools that teachers may leverage for planning and that students can use in their studies. The potential benefits and risks of AI also extend to data privacy; the digital skills that students, educators, and education leaders need; and ensuring access to technology for all learners. Policy and supports concerning AI should address all of these concerns in a framework that allows for new types of technology as innovations continue to emerge.
- **Engaging Multiple Stakeholders:** Given the array of AI concerns — from classroom instruction and student learning to operational and decision-support systems — addressing AI in schools will require the engagement of a diversity of stakeholders, especially teachers.
- **Ongoing Teacher Support:** Tools that leverage AI, and the practices that integrate them for teaching and learning, will continue to evolve. We recommend ongoing support for professional development for educational technology in general, including the use of AI tools, to equip our educators with the skills they need to model appropriate use of digital tools and support the evolution of student competencies and responsible use. This work will directly support each district’s strategic goals built upon the 21st century skills that define the Portrait of the Graduate.

Exploring national training resources through groups like the International Society for Technology in Education as well as state-level resources through the Regional Education Service Centers already engaged in AI professional development makes sense as first steps. And a serious exploration of “mandate relief” around required annual professional development should be part of this planning. Adding more responsibilities to invest time and effort into developing new skills without creating more time for teachers to do so will likely not bring about positive outcomes.

Senate Bill 5, Section 3 calls for the development of a “training program” on AI for teachers and educators. As part of a holistic approach to ensuring proper supports for educators — for their own professional development and to equip them to model and demonstrate proper use of AI for students — we support the concept of this recommendation, but such a program would require review of existing resources, as noted above, and additional resources to design and deploy curriculum and training. We estimate \$500,000 in unbudgeted funding to complete this work, and therefore cannot support this in practice at this time.

- **Development of a Tool:** Rather than developing a new tool for purposes that remain unclear through the language in SB 5, a collective group of stakeholders should review and endorse multiple AI-enabled tools for use in the classroom. State agencies are not equipped to develop — and, more importantly, maintain and support — such tools. As the Commission has reported (see [2023 Annual Report](#)), the field of educational technology has grown by approximately 50 percent year over year, and commercial providers offer thousands of effective educational technology tools in place throughout

our state today. The Commission acknowledges the compliance concerns addressed beginning on line 156 of Section 2 of SB 5. Since 2007, the Commission has provided a [clearinghouse of software](#) that schools can use in compliance with federal and Connecticut student data privacy laws ([CGS §§ 10-234aa –dd](#)). That list includes tools that leverage AI and serves as a foundational resource for schools to utilize in determining the educational tools that support student success.

On behalf of DAS and the Commission, I appreciate your consideration of the points raised above.