



**Governor Ned Lamont
State of Connecticut**



FACT SHEET
2019 Legislative Session

**SENATE BILL 874
*AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT***

Summary of Proposal:

This proposal would establish a Commission on Shared School Services to develop a plan for the sharing or consolidation of school services and school districts, with significant stakeholder involvement and in consultation with the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) and others; establish reporting by local school districts and municipalities on shared services; further encourage sharing of superintendents; provide board of education meeting date flexibility and more financial transparency and cooperation; add social-emotional learning, trauma-informed instruction and behavior management strategies to in-service training and other requirements; enhance collaboration between SDE, local and regional boards of education, and RESCs on improving efforts to meet the needs of students receiving special education and related services by evaluating existing models and funding mechanisms, recommending cooperative and regional models, and establishing Centers for Excellence; require parents who home school their children to register with their school district and require SDE and boards of education to post grade-level standards and curriculum online.

This proposal adds components to be addressed in a school building project application, prioritizes school construction for expansion of cooperating and regional school districts with a 25% reimbursement bonus capped at 95%, converts diversity school projects from a flat reimbursement rate of 80% to a 10% reimbursement bonus, and caps incorporated or endowed high schools or academies reimbursements at 60%.

Reason for Proposal:

Connecticut is a diverse state with 169 municipalities and 206 school districts, 1,493 public schools/programs and a total enrollment of 535,025 students. There have been discussions for years about more shared services, cooperating agreements, and consolidations of schools and districts. Although efficiency and equity demand further progress toward those goals, Connecticut's public education system is one of its most vital assets and any changes must be the result of an inclusive, deliberative process that rewards but does not rush to force partnership.

Significant Impacts:

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The work set forth in the bill will require significant effort by members of the Commission on Shared School Services along with education and municipal stakeholders, to resolve many of the challenges on how to better serve Connecticut students while doing so in a 21st century fashion.

Section Details:

Sec. 1 establishes the Commission on Shared School Services, to develop a plan for the redistricting or consolidation of school services and school districts. The Commission, with legislative and gubernatorial appointments, is broad-based and to begin work 30 days after passage of the bill. It is staffed by the State Department of Education, with funding of \$800,000 provided in the budget for staff and consultants, and terminates on June 30, 2027.

Sec. 2 charges the Commission with developing a plan and consulting with ACIR. It may establish subcommittees and working groups and conduct hearings. It is to develop 16 reports and recommendations involving myriad stakeholders on a range of topics between November 1, 2019 and October 1, 2020, with a comprehensive report due no later than December 1, 2020 and a hearing by December 15, 2020. Subsequent recommendations may follow.

Sec. 3 requires the Commissioner of Education to solicit proposals through a Request for Information for cooperative arrangements, regionalization of education, and incentives by March 1, 2020, and to share the results with the Commission on Shared School Services.

Sec. 4 requires each municipality and local or regional school board of education to report on which services have been shared or consolidated between them and others, to OPM, SDE and DAS, as well as the Commission on Shared School Services and ACIR, by September 15, 2019. It also requires them to report, by January 1, 2020, on what services will be shared and consolidated, with the same reporting requirements.

Sec. 5 builds upon the changes made in PA 17-2 (JSS) to Sec. 10-157 on shared school superintendents. For the school year commencing July 1, 2020, it encourages a local board of education for a municipality with (1) a population of fewer than ten thousand, (2) one or two elementary schools, or (3) fewer than 2,000 resident students to use a chief executive officer of the board to supervise its schools or to share superintendents. Districts who prefer to retain a separate superintendent will have the cost subtracted from their ECS funds.

Sec. 6 changes the meeting requirements for local and regional boards of education when superintendents are jointly employed.

Sec. 7 requires each regional board of education to establish a regional board of finance to review and make recommendations on the regional board of education's budget and expenses.

Sec. 8 states that the provisions of the general statutes on education shall apply to the operation of an incorporated or endowed high school or academy.

Sec. 9 increases the transparency of the governance and finances of an incorporated or endowed high school or academy.

Sec. 10 amends Sec. 10-223d on the expulsion of pupils.

Sec. 11 requires the State Department of Education, in consultation with a variety of stakeholders, to conduct a study and make recommendations on (1) the development of training and reporting requirements for pediatricians and child care providers to better identify a child's need for special education services; (2) incorporation of training on social-emotional learning, trauma and behavior in teacher-prep and professional development programs; and (3) improving efforts to meet the needs of students with special needs and students receiving special education services. As part of the effort, SDE is to collaborate with local and regional boards of education and RESCs on improving efforts to meet the needs of students receiving special education and related services. They will evaluate existing models and funding mechanisms for the services, including cooperative and regional models, and the establishment of Centers for Excellence.

Sec. 12 includes the Commissioner of SDE, or the commissioner's designee, on each RESC board.

Secs. 13-16 add social-emotional learning, trauma-informed instruction and behavior management strategies to in-service training and other requirements.

Sec. 17 requires parents who provide home instruction to register in their school district that they are providing such instruction.

Sec. 18 requires SDE to make model curricula and frameworks in reading and math for grades Pre-K to four available to parents who are registered to provide home school instruction and on its website.

Sec. 19 requires SDE to review grade level standards and consider expanding the model curricula and frameworks to include grades five to eight, inclusive.

Sec. 20 requires each local and regional board of education to make its grade level curriculum available on its website annually, effective July 1, 2020.

Sec. 21 adds components to be addressed in a school building project application, including the board of education's efforts to collaborate with other local or regional boards of education to reduce under-enrollment in the schools, documentation that the application meets evidence-based practices on a school's size, enrollment and academic program, and documentation of the building's existing condition.

Sec. 22 requires that any local school building committee include at least one member who has experience in the construction industry.

Sec. 23 revises Sec. 10-285a on school building projects with applications made after July 1, 2019, by prioritizing cooperative and regional school district expansion projects with a 25% reimbursement bonus and 95% reimbursement cap and converts diversity school projects from an 80% reimbursement rate to a 10% reimbursement bonus.

Sec. 24 caps the reimbursement rate for an incorporated or endowed high school or academy at 60% rather than the current 85%.

Sec. 24 adds RESC buildings that have received state funding to others where title reverts to the state if the building ceases to be used as a school within 20 years of legislative approval.

Sec. 25 amends the diversity school statute to be consistent with the 10% reimbursement bonus.