

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
Legislation and Bylaws Committee

November 4, 2009  
8:30 a.m.  
State Office Building  
Hartford, CT

**MINUTES**

Approved December 2, 2009

**Members Present**

Theresa Hopkins-Staten, Janet Finneran, Hunter Kodama, John Voss, and Kathleen O'Connor. Also present was Alan B. Taylor

**Staff Present**

Mark McQuillan, George Coleman, Barbara Beaudin, Jennifer Widness and Janice Dinnall

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:37 a.m.

**Minutes of Last Meeting**

The October 7, 2009, meeting minutes were approved unanimously on a motion by Janet Finneran, seconded by John Voss.

**Discussion Regarding Legislative Proposals relating to Revisions to Charter School Statutes**

Jennifer Widness walked through the handout which described different types of state charter funding models and the impact that these models would have on different types of districts, depending on how much money the district currently received in ECS, how much they currently spend on a per pupil basis in their district, and how many students are currently enrolled in charter schools.

Ms. Widness noted that an "Adjusted Net Current Expenditure" per pupil was used to compare what districts are currently spending on their pupils with what charter schools currently receive as a per pupil grant from the state. This adjusted amount does not include special education costs due to the fact that charter schools are not required to

pay for special education. The average adjusted net current expenditure per pupil in the state for 2008-2009 was \$10,300.

John Voss inquired whether \$10,300 is being skewed by a few districts, on the high end or the low end. It was suggested that the outliers at either end be removed from the formula or that the median be used.

Of all the models that were proposed, there was a general consensus that Model I, which was based on the Massachusetts model where districts pay a set tuition rate to the charter schools on a per pupil basis, was probably the most reasonable.

Mr. Voss inquired whether Massachusetts has difficulty with this funding model. The Commissioner indicated that there was some resistance in certain communities that did not want to lose the money to a state charter school.

Mr. Voss also inquired as to who would be responsible for providing special education services. The Commissioner responded that the sending district is responsible for paying for these services, which are subsidized in part by state and federal funding.

Kathleen O'Connor noted that a major part of the problem in the charter school funding discussion is the ECS formula and the huge disparities around what districts receive. Mrs. O'Connor wondered whether we should be looking into revising that formula. The Commissioner noted that significant changes were made to the formula only a few years back.

Janet Finneran stated that any funding model which shifted the burden from the state to the local districts would be unacceptable to her. She is concerned, especially, about the smaller districts. For example, if 10 students chose to enroll in a charter school, that could mean a loss of \$100,000 and the elimination of two or three teachers.

Deputy Commissioner George Coleman noted that a charter school can only open if it has a stable income source. It is unlikely, therefore, that the charter schools will open in a small suburban community where parents are unlikely to send their students. They are most likely to open in urban centers where the parents are looking for alternatives for their children.

Ms. O'Connor wondered whether there is a middle ground option. The Commissioner stated that his proposal to revise the local charter school law would provide some incentive for districts to expand local charters and potentially allow them to work with independent entities that are currently running state charters.

The Commissioner laid out the three proposals that the Committee was currently considering, as follows:

## Proposal 1

### *State Charters: Parity of funding*

Revise the current state funding model to require that charter schools receive parity in funding (minus special education costs).

## Proposal 2

### *State Charters: Variation of Massachusetts Funding Model*

Revise the current funding model for state charters so that districts would pay a set tuition rate for its students who attend state charter schools. This model would require that districts begin receiving an ECS grant for its students that attend charter school (to help offset the cost of paying the tuition rate).

## Proposal 3

### *Local Charters: Revise Current Law to Provide Incentive for Expansion*

Revise the current statute on local charter laws, based in part on the New Haven proposal. Districts would be required to pay for the students that attend; however, the state would contribute additional funds, if necessary, if the local adjusted net current expenditure is lower than what is determined to be a reasonable parity amount for a charter school per pupil expenditure.

The Commissioner explained that these proposals are not mutually exclusive but that we need to examine the pros and cons of each, at the next Committee meeting.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 a.m.