

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

The Legislation and Policy Development Committee

Wednesday, November 6, 2024 -- 1:00 p.m.
State Office Building, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut
Conference Room: **Plaza North, Meeting Room E**

Bonnie E. Burr, Chair
Erik M. Clemons, Kristen A. Record, Seth D. Zimmerman

Minutes - Draft

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the State Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee [“LPDC”] met in person on November 6, 2024.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Bonnie E. Burr called the meeting to order at 1:02. In addition to Ms. Burr, also present at the meeting were Committee Members Kristen A. Record and Seth D. Zimmerman. In addition, Board Vice-Chair Erin Benham, and Board student members Sreenidi Bala and Sophia Messina were in attendance. Joining the Board members from the CSDE were: Charles E. Hewes, Deputy Commissioner of Academics and Innovation; Sinthia Mone-Soyano, Deputy Commissioner of Educational Supports and Wellness; Laura J. Stefon, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison, Irene E. Parisi, Chief Academic Officer; Bryan Klimkiewicz, Special Education Division Director, Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Director of the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success; Robin Cecere, School Choice Division Director; Chloe Cummings, Coordinator of Systemic Implementation; and Michael P. McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs.

Presenter:

Laura J. Stefon, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison, CSDE

II. Review and Discussion: CSDE Legislative Proposals

Ms. Stefon provided a brief introduction of the CSDE’s legislative proposals, noting that as she is not a technical expert in the areas addressed by the proposals, members of the CSDE leadership were in attendance in order to answer any questions regarding the proposals that fell within their respective divisions. Ms. Stefon added that the purpose of her presentation was to obtain the insights of the LPDC members so that the CSDE could make any necessary revisions and otherwise put the proposals in final form for the December 4, 2024, meeting of the full State Board of Education

The initial six proposals arose from the Regional School Choice Office, and Ms. Cecere addressed their substance. A particular point of discussion pertained to the proposal that would shift the cost of services provided pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act from a student's home district to the interdistrict magnet school. Ms. Cecere explained that the magnet schools were better suited to plan for and finance the necessary accommodations. There was further discussion as to whether home districts would still have the right to provide the services if they chose to, whether "reasonable costs" would be "actual costs" in alignment with the State Board's Declaratory Ruling that reasonable special education costs within the context of charter schools were actual costs, and whether these costs would be shifted to the magnet school as opposed to a student's home district, and potential differences in allocation of special education costs as opposed to Section 504 costs.

Ms. Cecere noted that with respect to choice students, a subsequent proposal would shift responsibility for the PPT meeting to a student's home district, confirm that reasonable special education costs mean actual costs in accordance with the State Board's Declaratory Ruling in the context of charter schools, and would shift Section 504 responsibilities and costs to choice schools so as to parallel the magnet-school proposal.

Ms. Stefon and Ms. Cecere discussed the additional proposals from the Regional School Choice Office, including one that would exclude from public disclosure certain components, and their respective weights, of the protocol used by the Regional School Choice Office to implement the school-choice lottery used pursuant to the permanent injunction currently in place in the Sheff v. O'Neill litigation. Dr. Zimmerman raised concerns about transparency. Ms. Cecere and Mr. McKeon clarified that the majority of the components used in the lottery system are, in fact, already public, and discussed the importance that a relatively minor amount of them remain confidential so as to protect the integrity of the placement process and, by extension, enhance the State's ability to comply with the permanent injunction.

The final Regional School Choie Office legislative proposal garnering discussion addresses transportation grants in the context of Sheff. Ms. Cecere affirmed that the proposal's reference to "reasonable costs" of transportation meant "actual costs," and that "reasonable transportation" meant transportation to and from schools and extracurricular activities as opposed to extraneous situations like field trips.

Ms. Stefon then presented the remaining legislative proposals, which included the elimination of the current survey that is required to be completed by reading teachers, which Dr. Włodarczyk Hickey explained took time away from actual reading instruction. In addition, the CSDE's legislative proposals included: the alignment of statutory language with the new teaching certifications; the revision of the charter-application timeframe so as to align the RFP process with the Governor's biennial budget; the elimination of documentation that is duplicative of information that is already included in the special education students' Bill of Rights; the establishment of a State Seal for Civil Engagement, which proposal would enable the CSDE to establish the criteria for civic engagement that a student would need to satisfy in order to earn the Seal; the requirement that approved private special-education placements establish a tuition schedule that would assist

school districts to budget appropriately for the following school year; and confirming that the reference to reasonable costs for special education programming that is currently in state statutes for charter schools means actual costs.

Following the discussion of these legislative proposals, Ms. Record moved, and Dr. Zimmerman seconded, their adoption in whole. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Stefon explained that the proposals would now move to the full State Board for their consideration and possible adoption.

Ms. Burr asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Zimmer so moved, and Ms. Record seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting concluded at 1:59.