



## House Bill 6922

### AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES REGARDING THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS STATUTES

#### Testimony of the Department of Administrative Services

#### Education Committee

February 19, 2025

Senator McCrory, Representative Leeper, Senator Berthel, Representative Zupkus, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. We thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on **House Bill 6922: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Administrative Services Regarding the School Building Projects Statutes**.

**House Bill 6922** provides for several technical and substantive changes to the school building project grant program to help it operate more efficiently. These changes complement the agency's mission to support Connecticut's growth and drive continuous innovation.

**Sections 1 and 4** move the standalone HVAC grant program into the list of projects the Commissioner can approve administratively on a monthly basis. The grant program was originally established in 2022 to provide funding for HVAC improvements and grants were awarded to school districts on a competitive basis during two rounds of funding in 2023 and 2024. DAS received feedback from districts that the application process was difficult to navigate, and the timelines were restrictive. This proposal would resolve concerns of the program by providing a permanent non-competitive funding source that would allow applications on a rolling, monthly basis and through an application process districts currently use for certain time-sensitive projects such as roof replacements. This change would not affect the current awards granted under the existing program.

**Sections 1, 3, and 4** streamline school building projects for the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS). CTECS is a state agency for which the DAS Construction Services team administers construction projects, like other state agencies. However, CTECS is also required by statute to apply to the DAS school building project grant program, which is administered as a municipal reimbursement program. This additional layer of process creates confusion and adds delay to CTECS projects. If passed, this bill would remove the requirement that CTECS apply to the school building grant program for funding, thus requiring them to follow the state construction process only.

**Section 1** also makes two other changes. First, this section removes an obsolete provision allowing requests for refunds when school buildings are converted to public use. Districts were previously required to repay any grant funding received for any school building no longer used for public school purposes within a 20-year period on an amortized basis. Districts were allowed to request forgiveness if the school building was converted to some other public purpose. Last year, the legislature eliminated the repayment requirement for school buildings that are converted for any public purpose during the 20-year period. The language allowing forgiveness requests is no longer necessary since repayment would not be required if the building is used for public purposes.

Second, this section eliminates a duplicative and unnecessary application requirement that superintendents affirm that the district considered natural light, wireless connectivity technology, and the school safety infrastructure criteria. The DAS Plan Review team already reviews school building plans for compliance with existing laws and regulations, including the school safety infrastructure criteria.

**Section 2** eliminates a provision by which districts are required to obtain prior written approval of certain consultant contracts. This additional requirement is also redundant as the program already defines which contract expenses would be eligible for reimbursement, and compliance with the substantive provisions that are listed in this section are reviewed by the school building grant team through the grant process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we urge passage of **House Bill 6922**.