



## House Bill 5147

### **An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Administrative Services Regarding the School Building Projects Statutes**

### **Joint Testimony of the Department of Administrative Services and the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection**

### **Education Committee**

**February 20, 2025**

Senator McCrory, Representative Leeper, Senator Berthel, Representative Zupkus, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) thank you for the opportunity to provide joint testimony in support of House Bill 5147: **An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Administrative Services Regarding the School Building Project Statutes**. We will focus our joint comments on Section 2 of the bill, which makes several changes to the School Building Projects Advisory Council (SBPAC or Council).

#### **Background Information Regarding SBPAC**

As a way of background, the SBPAC was established by Governor Malloy under Public Act 11-51, as codified in C.G.S. Sec. 10-292q. In Section 223 of Public Act 17-2 from the June Special Session, the SBPAC was tasked with exploring the feasibility of using blueprints for prototype model school designs in new construction projects to reduce state funding for the design and construction of public schools. SBPAC released a [report](#) detailing the challenges of adopting such a model and recommended against moving forward with prototype model school buildings.

Following the completion of this charge, the Council's focus has shifted to discussions about school safety. This change was prompted by Public Act 22-118, which eliminated the School Safety Infrastructure Council (SSIC) and transferred responsibility for the periodic review and update of school safety infrastructure criteria to the SBPAC. The SSIC was originally established by Public Act 13-3 after the Sandy Hook shootings to develop school safety infrastructure criteria that must be considered into any school construction project receiving state grant money.

#### **Proposed Changes to SBPAC**

Currently, SBPAC is chaired by the Commissioner of Administrative Services (DAS), with DAS staff providing administrative support. As the Council's focus shifts to school safety, we collectively

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believe from a policy perspective it should be housed within DESPP. Although DAS administers grants to municipalities for school construction, it does not have expertise or jurisdiction on school safety infrastructure. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), on the other hand, has in-house expertise in this domain and regularly interacts with school districts on safety matters.

DAS and DESPP propose several changes to the SBPAC's statutes to better align them with the Council's focus on school safety. These changes include: (1) renaming the council to the Safety and Security Infrastructure Advisory Committee, (2) designating the DESPP Commissioner or their designee as chair, (3) updating the Council's membership, and (4) establishing school safety and security infrastructure as the committee's primary mission.

### **DESPP Comments on SBPAC Change**

DESPP believes these changes are both practical and necessary. Aligning the Council's leadership and mission with the state agency best equipped to address school safety will strengthen the state's ability to provide informed, consistent, and effective guidance on safety and security infrastructure in school construction projects. This realignment fits squarely within the DESPP's mission and efforts already underway, including administering the School Security Grant Program.

These proposed updates reflect the state's ongoing commitment to protecting students, educators, and school communities, as well as enhance the state's ability to provide meaningful and timely input on critical safety issues. We look forward to continuing our partnership with DAS and other stakeholders to accomplish this important mission.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony, and we urge passage of the bill.

### **DAS Comments on Section 1**

DAS also supports Section 1 of the bill. According to C.G.S. 10-285a, districts have specific opportunities to receive higher reimbursement rates for school construction projects that meet certain statutory criteria. Section 1 of the bill adds clarifying language stating that the reimbursement percentage for a school building project cannot exceed 100%. This will ensure that school building projects are not over-reimbursed.