

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

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SB 59	PA 214	1996
Senate :	1481, 3366-3474	(110)
House :	6243-6291	(49)
Edu. :	803, 804-805, 835, 838, 844, 859, 860, 865, 872-880, 928, 944-963, 966-967, 969, 981-982	(49)

total 203 pgs.

Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing(s) and/or Senate  
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S-392

CONNECTICUT  
GEN. ASSEMBLY  
SENATE

PROCEEDINGS  
1996

VOL. 39  
PART 5  
1343-1701

kmg

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Senate

Wednesday, April 17, 1996 001481

Health.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is to refer this item to the Committee on  
Public Health. Without objection, so ordered.

SEN. FLEMING:

Calendar 305, is passed temporarily.

Calendar 307, Substitute for SB300, File 404,

Madam President, I would move that item to the Consent  
Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Motion is to refer to the Consent Calendar.  
Without objection, so ordered.

SEN. FLEMING:

Calendar Page 7, Calendar 316, is marked Go.

Calendar 319, is marked Go.

Calendar 320, is pass retained.

Calendar 323, Madam President, I would move that  
that item be referred to the Committee on  
Appropriations.

SB 59

THE CHAIR:

Motion is to refer this item to the Committee on  
Appropriations. Without objection, so ordered.

SEN. FLEMING:

Calendar 324, Madam President, I would move that

that item be referred to the Committee on

SB 343

S-397

CONNECTICUT  
GEN. ASSEMBLY  
SENATE

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1996

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3128-3484

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Senate

Thursday, May 2, 1996

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all clear and running smoothly. So I feel pretty good.  
And I thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

THE CHAIR:

I'm sure I speak for all of us, so we're delighted once again that you're here. And I'm sure the heart beat will go up a little bit more before the session is over today. And I hope for your benefit, not anything else. Are there any other points of personal privilege? If not, Mr. Clerk can we start with the Calendar.

THE CLERK:

Page 14, Calendar 323, Order of the Day,  
Substitute for SB59, File 428, AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC  
CHARTER SCHOOLS. Favorable Report of Committee on  
Education, Appropriations. Clerk has two Amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Thank you Madam President. I move the Joint  
Committee's Favorable and acceptance of the bill, and  
seek its passage.

THE CHAIR:

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Would you comment further?

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President. Actually I would like to have the Clerk call LCO-5469.

THE CLERK:

Senate Amendment Schedule "A" LCO-5469, introduced  
by Senator Freedman, Sullivan, Eads, Fleming, and Kissel.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Excuse me Madam President, there is a later edition of the same Amendment, with more names on it.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Sorry. I guess he's just reading our names.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Oh, alright. Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President, I move the Amendment, seek leave of the chamber to summarize, and waive its reading.

THE CHAIR:

Would you comment further?

SEN. FREEDMAN:

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Yes, before I get into Amendment, certainly developing a public school charter bill has not been easy. As you know, this chamber last year voted positively to get a charter school bill out. And when it went downstairs to the House, it sort of lingered on the calendar and didn't survive the session.

Prior to that, two years ago, Senator Genuario and Senator Sullivan had a charter school bill that barely made it out of this chamber. So, technically you can say that this bill has been a three-year piece of work that has taken a lot of people's input, a lot of people's concessions, a lot of people's positive attitude about assuring getting something through this chamber that will also be able to go through the other House, so that once and for all we will be able to look toward another way, and another type of public schools in this state.

Certainly Senator Sullivan, Representative Cafero, my co-chairman Representative Staples, Senator Kissel, Senator Cook, the teachers, the Commission of Education on the state, the Department of Education, the Commissioner, the people on his staff.

We have all worked together, trying to develop something that will help all of us. I believe this Amendment is the product, not of only this year's work,

but all the work that preceded it. And I would hope that after I explain the Amendment, we would have another positive vote going out of this chamber. I certainly would like to thank all those people that participated in bringing this to fruition today, and letting us go forward.

Last year when we discussed a charter school bill, we were talking about only one system of public charter schools in the state. With a lot of help though, this bill this year develops two types of charter schools. Local public schools that may be converted and will still be treated as a local public school.

And that particular type of charter will go through the local board of education. Once there is proven a need and a desire to go forward with a local conversion, the local board of education must hold a public hearing. And if and when it approves a charter by a majority vote, we'll then forward that on to the state department and the State Board of Education.

Because we are limiting the number of conversions, the state department ultimately will have to approve or reject local conversions. We are limiting them to the number of twelve within a two year period, which would commence in 1997, and go through 1999.

We have another level of charter which we call a

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state charter school. This can be formed by any group other than a local public school that is currently in existence, a local private school, or any independent school, or any home teaching groups. This would be a new entity created, could be a non-profit, could be parents, could be teachers, who for one reason or another would like to do education in a different form in the State of Connecticut.

They would have to put together their requirements for their charter and apply to the State Board of Education in order to be able to receive the charter. Once the location has been determined, the State Board of Education is required to hold a public hearing in where ever that school district may be to get public input.

And then when it decides it's going to offer the charter, it has to again accept by a majority vote, or reject by a majority vote. Again, we're talking a limit, because we're going in a new direction. We're talking again twelve schools that could be state charter schools with a limit of one thousand students, and no more than 250 students or twenty-five percent of the student population of a school district, which ever is less.

I think we, on the Education Committee, believe

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that by going in this direction, we are not only offering teachers, parents, but the children who receive an education in this state, another opportunity to maybe learn in a different setting, a different method, a different creation from what we're all used to.

We know we have some excellent public schools in this state. We probably already have some excellent models from which we can look at and say, there is a way that somebody may think about starting a charter school. Whether it be a conversion, or a state charter school.

Teachers who will be teaching in these charter schools, particularly state charter schools, will be required to have certification. But when they commence, only one half of them must have what we call, the full teaching certificate.

For anyone who has not got that teaching certificate, the state department offers what is called the alternative route, and will allow those teachers, particularly the experts who come out of industry if they so desire. Or an expert who comes out of a college faculty and hasn't had the teaching certificate for an elementary school, to go through the alternative route.

And then we are creating a new temporary certificate, which is not new to teachers who come in from other states, but it's new for charter schools. If someone has their Bachelor's Degree and they want to teach and they apply too late to the charter school, or for some reason or another a teacher dropped out before the school year began, the state department can give them a temporary charter school certificate, which is good for one year, and then they must be enrolled in the alternative certificate program.

I think what we were trying to do was to cover the concerns which were created after we passed last year's bill. I believe we addressed all of those concerns. Guaranteed in this is that in any school where there are students who require special education they, again if they're special education grants available, will be eligible to receive those grants.

The payment for the state public schools that a charter would work the same way as our technical school system works right now. And, of course, the local charter school would be paid for by the local boards of education under terms deemed in their charter when it was granted.

I believe in essence we have covered the, I've covered the major areas. Again, I would like to

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stress, these are public schools. These are being established so that when and if they come on to line, to allow an opportunity for another way to change education in this state. Or to become as I see them, mini laboratories possibly.

At this time, I think I would like to yield to Senator Sullivan, if he'd like to take the yield, because I'm sure he might have some comments he would like to add.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Sullivan, will you accept the yield?

SEN. SULLIVAN:

I gladly accept the yield, Madam President, and I thank Senator Freedman. I particularly thank Senator Freedman for her partnership and leadership in this effort. We have indeed come a long way. It is not the first time that this chamber has discussed and debated charter school legislation, and hopefully it will be the third time that we pass charter school legislation.

The difference being we have a fairly strong expectation that with the concurrence of Republicans and Democrats in the House, this will be the year that charter school legislation is enacted and signed by the Governor, who also has been enthusiastic in his support of this legislation.

So on a day when our nerves may be tested a bit, and our partisanship tested a bit as well, I think it's fortunate that we are beginning on this note, of what frankly I think is great hope for the children, and the education of the State of Connecticut.

It's probably fair to say that our schools suffer less from failure than they do from routine. And it is also clearly true that we offer outside of public education, much more flexibility than we even offer to our public schools.

And then we complain because our teachers don't have the opportunity to do as well as they could. Or students don't achieve as well as they could. And yet, we don't provide the flexibility. We don't provide the creativity. We don't provide the opportunity to try and excel and succeed.

That's what fundamentally, charter schools are about. Senator Harp, in our caucus earlier today asked probably, I think, the best question, what's the philosophy? Why would we do this? And there actually are several philosophies I suppose that go with this.

One of them is the idea of flexibility. Providing some play in the joints, an opportunity to try different things, and to focus in. The other is the idea of grass roots. That it is time to provide in our

public school system, the opportunity for choice, choice which does not discriminate, but choice that nonetheless is volunteered by parents, and children, and teachers, and educators and administrators. The opportunity to provide that at the grass roots level through what will now be state chartered schools.

So that individuals who want to try something different, and creative and thoughtful, have a chance to test that out and do so within the public school system. Also to try to do some innovation, some success, some excellence. And the way we've done teacher certification, even some recruitment into certification, which hopefully for some will replace a program that we unfortunately eliminated about a year ago, that was a way for, particularly minority teachers and educators, to find their way into full certification.

This bill, by dint of the certification approach that it takes, in a sense recaptures that opportunity for people to find their way into teaching in the schools in the State of Connecticut. To the extent that it focuses on sponsorship by higher education institutions and location in communities which are priority school districts, this legislation puts the focus where it needs to be -- in those communities that

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most need the opportunity to provide different choices, different hopes, different dreams, different opportunities, for those children who unfortunately now are to a large measure consigned to failure.

Is this the answer to what we need to do for public education in Connecticut? Of course it is not. It is one part of the answer. And it is a very important part of the answer. In those states where charter schools have been part of the fabric of education now for some years, all expectations about creaming out the best students, discriminating against others, have not been fulfilled.

We have found small schools, highly intensive, highly focused, highly successful, and highly diverse. Indeed, the charter schools across this country have turned out to be more diverse and more successful than our regular public schools, and certainly even than the private schools.

And I guess this would be the last point I would offer. Again, in thanking Senator Freedman and Representative Cafero, Representative Staples, and all the others in this chamber, Senator Williams, who have been supporters of this over the years.

There is a test for our public schools. Indeed there is a triple test for our public schools. One is

the test of public confidence. This bill helps win the test of public confidence by giving the public another entree to be connected, engaged, involved, in shaping education at the grass roots level. There is a test of success for our public schools. And this gives our children an opportunity to succeed.

And sadly these days there is also an ideological test. And it is the test of public education versus those who would consign us to a twin school system of public and private education. Those who would advocate for school vouchers for private education at the expense of public schools, and the public vision we have of education.

And so charters are indeed a public response to what is otherwise the very grave risk that a constituency of dissatisfaction will arise in this state and in this nation, and eventually challenge successfully our long standing commitment to the principles of public education and public schooling for all.

I think this is a home run. I'm sure not everyone in this circle will agree with that. But I think we have done good work. We have worked hard with a variety of interests. We have worked hard with the teacher organizations, with the school boards, with the

school administrators, with a variety of folks throughout the state and the country. And not everyone agrees to everything that's in this bill to this day.

But the good news is, thanks to Senator Freedman, that we have had a process that has led us to the point where we all can stand together in our advocacy for education, teachers, legislators, school administrators, advocates, and say that as this bill stands with its strengths and its limitations, it is a worthy step forward in the arsenal of helping kids to succeed better in our state, and helping teachers to have greater opportunity to be even better teachers.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kissel.

SEN. KISSEL:

Thank you very much Madam President. I rise in support of this Amendment and the underlying bill. And at the outset would like to congratulate Senator Judith Freedman for all the very hard work that she's put into this tricky balancing act of trying to put together an acceptable bill that will fly through the Senate and be accepted by the House as well.

And I'd also like to thank Senator Cook and Senator Sullivan for working very patiently with

Senator Freedman to make this a reality. When it comes to charter schools, I'm the prodigal son. I did not support this concept in years past, because I had concerns about our public schools, and our commitment to public education.

It seems to me that on balance, what we've crafted here is something that will achieve that same commitment to our public school system while offering some choice, as Senator Sullivan so aptly put, at the grass roots level.

I harking back to the term kindergarten, for those of you who are familiar with it, it comes from the German word meaning child's garden. The notion arose in Europe. Kindergarten was supposed to expose children at the outset to a variety of interests. A garden.

And what we have here is a methodology that allows municipalities, groups of individuals, people interested in education, a variety of methodology to achieve education that is limited solely by the imagination of those individuals who come together who want to see good changes occur for our children.

The final point I'd like to make is this. As one of the two vice-chairs of the Education Committee, along with Senator Cook, over the last few weeks I've

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had an opportunity to go visit nearly every one of the school boards in my district and talk to them about their concerns. And what amazed me is when we got to the issue of charter schools, this was not a partisan issue.

Democrats and Republicans alike on school boards said, give us an opportunity to explore new ways to help educate our youngsters. And that was driven home to me. And I stood there and I discussed the merits of charter schools with them, some of my concerns regarding teachers, public school commitment, funding mechanisms.

And I think what Senator Freedman has put together here is an excellent compromise, and an excellent step forward to helping to achieve those educational goals all of us are committed to. Thank you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Cook.

SEN. COOK:

Thank you Madam President, and good afternoon. It is with a great deal of pride and pleasure that I rise to support the charter school bill before us today. As has been alluded to in the discussion already, I have been a proponent of charter schools since the first day that I swore in as a State Senator here.

I believe public schools of choice will enhance that important contract that needs to be strengthened between parent and child in the engagement of the educational future of the child. Simply by virtue of the presence of charter schools in our state, we are going to solidify that contract, that choice, that parents are making with their children to improve the quality of their education.

To engage in the process of education. And to remember that it is a parent's responsibility to assure good quality education for their child. One of the reasons that I became such a strong advocate for charter schools in the offering of flexibility and innovation and education that they offer, came from my reading of the Groustein report of about two years ago called the Broken Contract.

I was extraordinarily distressed at the results of that report, citing an enormous difference of a perception in our state between the way parents think about the process and the quality of education in our state. The way the public feels about quality of education in our state. And the way the educators felt was the process of education in our state.

We had groups of people light years apart, about what was going on in our public schools. One of the

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reasons that we were not able to get to the kind of consensus that we wished to get on the commission for educational excellence in Connecticut was precisely because we had a huge difference of opinion on what was going on in our public schools.

I believe the charter school bill before us today that is a public charter school choice bill, will close that enormous difference that's between how the public feels we are making progress in public education, and the way educators feel they are participating in progress in education.

The Groustein report, the Broken Contract, cited that educators in general felt that we were doing a terrific job in education, and that all we needed were more money and everything would be wonderful. And yet the public and parents felt that it wasn't money that was needed.

It was a commitment toward the closer contact between parents and kids and the process of education that was needed. Charter schools are going to offer those opportunities to express that process in lots of different ways in our state.

I believe that this is an important enabling piece that we are putting forward to our local boards of education, and to other groups of non-profit

organizations who may wish to form charters all across our state. We have the beginning steps today. Yes, it's only twenty four charters that will be allowed at this point. But I believe that we are planting seeds for something that's going to grow across our state with great success.

When people purposefully get together for an education purpose, great things can be accomplished. One of the pieces, and I think a critical piece that's important about the charter school bill before us today, is that teachers will be able to come together as a group and on purpose say, we want to teach this way.

That is an extraordinary leap in difference between how public schools are organized now, where teachers are joined together in a faculty on basis of seniority or any other geographic reason that puts them all in one building together to teach.

But a charter school is going to have teachers who have purposefully come together and said, we want to teach this way, and we want to teach this way together. And we will work on all of the decision making that has to be put together so that we can teach in this method.

That is an extraordinary innovation for us to offer to the children and parents in this state. And I

think it is one of the highest pieces of quality of education improvement that we can offer. I am an enthusiastic proponent of this bill. I thank all the members who have worked so hard to get us to this point, moving through all of those problems and perceptual issues that were part of the discussion.

And what we have before us, I think, is going to be a major piece of legislation to offer the best new idea in improving quality of public schools in this state that we have seen in my tenure as a Senator. I am very proud to be part of this. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. To the maker, Senator Freedman. Senator Freedman in earlier remarks, there were remarks that were, and believe me I'm for any changes in education, there were remarks that said that in the charter school proposal, that we are going to have measures that will test the children to succeed.

And I would tend to think that we want to test the children to excel. The remark that was made in, to the inference to me was, testing the children to succeed, is saying that we are going to engage in an additional area of public education and by some method not known

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here, we're going to put together a school, and we're going to have the similar makeup, as to the makeup we have in our schools now. And in essence lending itself to say that we're going to try to help children who are, who need more help, rather than investing in a program which is going to allow children who can excel and want to excel, to fit into the program.

Could you distinguish for me how the, this charter school can gain even more support, in providing a product for young people, in my opinion, who should be tested to excel. There should be an academic excellence involved in this school versus was stated as to be, we want to help children to succeed, referencing children who have, who obviously have greater need inside our public school system.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes Madam President, through you to Senator Bozek. First, I believe you might want to start a charter school if that is the type of school you would like to see going on line. That would be a motivation for getting a group of parents together, and a group of teachers together, to come up with what you would like to see a charter school to be. I don't believe we're

here today to dictate what the outcome of the charter school must be. Because it could be a variety. And I believe my colleague, when she made reference to that, was talking about the idea of conceivably you could have a charter school geared to students who might be potential drop outs.

That public school may want to look at these students and say, wait a minute, isn't there something different that we could be doing, and can we do it through a charter school, and get these students organized so that they won't drop out, that they will succeed, and maybe even excel to their utmost aptitudes.

So, as I see it, and I believe as my other colleagues see it, the purpose is set in the charter. And for whatever reason that purpose will be stated, and then the commissioner or the local board of ed will have to determine whether this is reasonable, and will do what it's supposed to be doing.

So I see it as a very broad spectrum. I would love you to get a group of parents together and say, would you like to go forward and do something like this as a charter school? Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

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SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. You had just completed saying that it's possible, we'd have a charter school which would be in essence, designed for children who might be potential drop outs. Personally, I don't see in recollect that in any of the bill drafting, or a legislation that was talked about, that it could be targeted for one group.

And in essence, if we're going to spend more money on additional education, the public is willing to spend more money on public education because we're hoping that we're going to get a better product because the produce we've been producing has some draw backs.

And that's why we're engaging in additional areas to make sure the produce we're producing is better. So, my question right now is, and follow up to what you just said was, with regard to potentially having a school which would be for children who are drop outs, if that were so, can we, can the school be designed initially so that it can be for children who can excel?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Madam President, through you, yes.

THE CHAIR:

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Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. Can you describe for me, how these two types of schools could come about. That is, and how we could fit children into a school to excel. How can we, do we test them, do we have applications? Or how does that come about that we know we have children who need to excel?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President. I believe if Senator Bozek looks at Section 2, on page, I'm sorry, on page 3, small d. It explains the whole process. And one of the things that it is very clearly stated in the process, is although you may want to start a school for a particular type of student, you have no right, just as our public schools currently today, have no right to discriminate against any student that may want to attend that school whether or not they fall into that category.

You may not pretest them for admission into the program that you're offering. I believe it would have to be done by those who are most interested in sending their children there, will recognize that this is where

they want to send their children. But if it's a school for drop outs, and I'm not a potential drop out, would my parents send me there? Not necessarily.

If it's a school for students who are at the top level of the academic spectrum, they might want to send me there because they might feel that some of that would rub off on me. But I cannot be discriminated against because I don't fall into any category. I must be taken.

I would assume though, that once a student got in there, it would be determined best by the parents and that child, whether it was the right fit or not, and then that they would go forward from there. So we're trying to leave the door open for specialty, while at the same time saying you may not, you shall not discriminate for any reason.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Through you Madam President. So that fit, what you just said Senator, fit what I thought was in here about non-discriminating. Therefore, the words that were used in essence to try to tell others, and the rest of us in the circle that these are going to take care of children who are failing, and this is going to

test the children to succeed. And this is going to give hope to other children who can excel. It is not actually in that package.

And in essence what we have is, we have an alternate public school. And what we don't know is, the size of the class, what they can do, and therefore potentially it's possible, it's possible now maybe not likely, that we could get the same homogeneous class of children who would want to get out of, escape one class situation that they're parents would hope they would get out. They would wind up going to this school and be in the same situation. With the same type of make up of peers in that classroom.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Madam President, since we have no application for charters on hand, it's very difficult to ascertain, but I believe what we're trying to do, and what we are saying is, there are many, many options out there to try some different things in education.

This is an avenue in which these things may be tried. And we have tried to provide the broadest spectrum possible, so that we will not end up with a one-class type of a school, in terms of social strata.

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So that we will have mixtures. And that's why we built in a very strong non-discrimination clause, I believe.

Because no matter who or what, if they want to participate in that school, they cannot be rejected for any reason. If their parents want them to go there, the only reason they would not be able to go is the limitations on the numbers in the enrollment.

I think this is a step toward opening up a door that will now allow a lot of different things to happen. But it will be other people who will determine what will go into that charter. And it will be other people who will determine whether they're going to buy into that or not.

I would like to give Senator Bozek a beautiful example of what I saw when I went up to Boston. I did visit the charter school that is in Boston. It's run by a for-profit-company.

They went on line in September. They have 600 students in the building. They have kindergarten through fourth grade right now. And the greatest thing that I saw going on in that building was, number one, you had children who came from all economic levels in the City of Boston.

You had children who came from many different backgrounds. Different religious backgrounds,

different ethnic backgrounds, and they were a school that was functioning together toward one goal -- their own achievement.

What I saw going on in that school brought back to me an excitement that I hadn't felt from early days of teaching when I first walked into my first classroom with a bunch of first graders that had never gone to kindergarten.

The excitement that existed in that building, kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grade, was absolutely incredible. The director told me parents pulled their children out of some of the best independent schools in the area to have them attend this charter school.

All of this was done on a lottery basis. They just hoped that their children would get in there. Again, we say in our law that if you get to that point where you have so many applications, it will go by lottery.

And therefore, again, you don't control who's going to be in there. The thing that most impressed me, they had children who had special ed needs. They took those children and they went out and purchased the services from the City of Boston schools, of which they are considered to be one, to provide the services so

that those children could be part of that school. I've seen that. And I was so impressed I decided there is a good option here.

I also feel our public schools are doing a terrific job in many areas. But this is another avenue for all of us to travel. And I think it's a wise avenue, if we want to see public school choice.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. Mentioning the school that you referred to in Boston, which was for profit, and had 600 students, and had special ed children, of which they're qualified to take in, is that a program that they're qualified to take in like public, like non-profit and profit institutions that are qualified to handle special ed so they fixed on grant programs, they get paid. Alright.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

I shake my head a lot, but I guess I should go on the record. They have no choice. This is another

public school in the City of Boston. It is treated as another public school, although it's a charter, and their funding does come in a different route.

Right now they are considered a public school in the City of Boston. But because they can access outside funding and some other things, they are unique. Boston is also trying something, and I believe our confederation, and our teachers, our compatriots in the teachers union brought this to our attention.

They're doing some experimentation within the realm of their other public schools to try and see what's working and what isn't. And this is why the concept of the local public school conversion could be very important for those people that want to try something a little bit different that starts at the grass roots level.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you. You kept referencing, Senator, something a little different. And so far what I see is, and I think it's understandable, it's the same school because all our children can apply. They can all go there. But there's only so many seats. They have to adhere to some guidelines by the state board,

otherwise they could be, their license could be revoked. Is that fair?

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. The guidelines will be in the charter. The charter will be very detailed as to what their objective is, what they plan on doing, performing, whatever it is they expect of the students that attend that school.

And they will be held to complying to those pieces that are in the charter, and if they do not, there is an option for the State Department of Education, one, to place them on warning, and two, if they haven't worked out a plan that will remedy the situation, to revoke the charter because they're not doing what they had promised.

This is a contract. A contract between the people that are going to be sending their children, knowing whatever it is that will be in this charter school is going to be given to them, and worked through with them, or a way to revoke it by the Commissioner and the Department of Education. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Through you Madam President. With regard to their

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charter which I understand can have certain proposals that are approved by the board. What I'm getting at is, can the school charter be arranged in such that it's a, while everybody can apply, understandably those that would apply, if they're everybody, they know almost ahead of time that they're not going to be able to succeed by how the charter is allowed in the area of, of enhanced study, or requirement that's going to be made.

And if this is so, if it is, a further qualifier, what happens to those students who attend that school and are failing? Can the school send them back? What is your concept of being at a public institution? How is that going to be handled?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I would believe the charter school would have an obligation not only to keep those students there but to develop a program, no matter what level they're functioning at, that will work for those students.

That they cannot send them back some place else, that they are still a public school, and for those reasons have to treat the students the same as any

other public school in this state. You cannot pick and choose your student population. Your population may pick you. And the parents of those students may pick you. And the parents of those students who have differences and feelings about it may decide that they want their child placed back in the other school.

Or they may say, let's sit down and work this out. Those details will all be in the designation of the charter. They will have to explain, and I'm sure the Department of Education will develop through, what we have in this statute, some very stringent guidelines for the accommodating of all students.

And once again, I would like to reiterate that if 1,500 students apply for 200 slots, it's going to be done by lottery. So they won't have any clue, even though they're trying to be very specific in what they may want to do to challenge students who is going to show up at their door once that lottery is done.

But that doesn't make it bad. It just means that they now have to be flexible enough to turn things around and use their brain where they have been trained to teach and be educators to develop the program that's going to make it all work under whatever the charter has prescribed. And I would believe, given the amount of experience, and the amount of training that most

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teachers have, that this challenge will be accomplished. And it will be accomplished in a way that when we look at it, we will say, how did they do it, but they did it.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Which brings me to two other areas. One of them is which she just concluded on. Is, what, why can't teachers do this now if effectively they're going to have the same classroom?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I believe there are a lot of constraints in the current system right now through state mandate, through local communities. And we had a discussion a couple of days ago, somebody said, oh why couldn't two teachers and two board of ed members sit down and decide that this is what they wanted to do?

I've worked through that bureaucracy in the school system. It's very difficult sometimes, even when you're willing, parents, teachers, to make those changes. Because you're not dealing with the public.

Before this thing gets underway, the concept has to be put together, and it has to be brought before a public hearing.

I think it would be far easier at this point to go that route, to break down some of the constraints. I tried to do a readiness class when I taught in Weston. It took us three-and-a-half years to convince everybody that this was worth trying.

Once we got it on line, they realized that. But parents have to buy into charter schools at the very beginning, and be part of the process with the teachers. Right now, it's very difficult through the current bureaucracy to be able to do some of these things.

I've served on the board of ed. I've served as a teacher. I know the complications that stand in the way. What we're doing through this is trying to release a lot of those constraints and allow people in their best creative mode, be it a parent, be it a teacher, be it a group of people, to come up with something that they feel they can make work.

And I believe because they feel that strongly, they now have to go out and sell it, and sell it through their charter. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

One of the things I'm trying to get at Senator is, while you explain, while you explained quite a bit, still it's the one big gray line that's not distinguishing for me to be able to explain to my constituents how different this school is going to be than the public school when they have to conform, they have the same group of children can wind up at the door, except that there's going to be fewer of them in the building.

And in fact they could co-share a public school building. It could be divided in half. And I'm sure if things are worked out right, they might just wind up in one of the public school buildings in some community where they do have the room.

How do I get, how do I get to explain to the public that what we're doing here is in essence giving something different? You're saying that teachers are under different constraints. What, these other teachers are going to be under the same constraints. Because they're guided by the fact that if things aren't being produced, then their charter is going to be withdrawn. Yet, they're going to run into the same problems, because they have the same mix, they are,

they allow for no selection of any of the children in this particular program, and they're going to be working with the same homogeneous setting, except that the management group is going to be 200 children in the same elementary school versus potentially 350 to 600 children.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. One, on a local public school conversion there will be no limitation on the number of students. The only time there's going to be a limitation is on the state charter because of lack of funds in the future that would coming from the state to support those charter schools.

That was why we had to limit the numbers to 1,000. But if there's a local public school conversion, it doesn't, we're not talking any particular number. If you're going to take a whole school in your home town and say, we want to make this a school for whatever, and develop your charter.

You're going to work with your board of education, you're going to work with your parents, you're going to try to develop that school, and you could be turning a school of 400 students into a charter school. You may

decide you only want to run a school that's a kindergarten, first grade school. Therefore, just be delineating that as being in your charter, you have to shift all those other children some place else in town.

But you may end up with a school of 400 kindergartners and first graders, geared toward a readiness program, and a reading program. I mean, I think there are a lot of ideas out there. It's not for me to determine what the ideas are going to be.

That, again, will be developed at the local level. I think what may happen though is, because of the way this is worded, you could see things happening possibly as a longer school day, a longer school year. Whatever is going to be embedded in that charter that these groups or parents, or teachers feel will bring about the necessary change that they're anticipating. And it still could be a classroom like we see it today.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. Let me just a, we're doing this for a while but, just let me try to go a little bit further, in gaining some explanation and insight as to making other people be satisfied with the fact that I would be voting to support this. And I'm

interested in knowing, most of the public is concerned about improvement in education. We can hide behind, some people can hide behind some arguments.

This is why we're doing these things. This is why there's discussion about magnet schools. What magnet schools might, how they might help. And the discussion about support for other parochial and private schools in trying, they're looking to gain monetary support because they have financial difficulties, not education difficulties.

But in the whole area of education, in a number of our cities, not only urban, but in more urban towns, people do not have the faith in the product that's coming out. And by scientific measurement, scientific measurements we're showing that it's not.

And by the ability of young people who are dropping by, the fact that young people are dropping out at the rate they are, and by the fact that those who are coming out of some of these schools don't have the skills and the writing skills, or comprehension skills.

How do I communicate to them in some fashion besides a hope that this particular language, this bill is going to produce more excellence in our education?

THE CHAIR:

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Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I don't think we can guarantee to everybody that the changes that are going to come about are going to increase reading scores 100% or handwriting skills 100%, because we don't know what the specifics of the charter are going to be.

I can tell you this. These schools will be required to give our Mastery tests, so that we will have a benchmark for comparison to know as they're going through their charter, and their experiences, as to whether they're maintaining what our own current schools are maintaining as levels.

Or whether they're surpassing those levels. And if they surpass those levels, wouldn't you want to take a look and find out why. And wouldn't you maybe want to spend some time in that school to find out if we can't do things differently some place else within the framework of our community.

You also made a comment, and I'd like to reflect on that. Suppose we had a trade school that decided, here we want to be a trade school to teach youngsters how to go out and do a specific job. Learn how to work machinery. Learn how to work computers. There's an

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opportunity through the charter schools now, not only to work within the framework of the educational community, but to work with the business community in coming up with another agenda that local public schools just can't afford to do these days.

The other idea behind the charter is, it's a door that's opening to see how many different things can be done in different ways without our saying, you can't do this. It's a step. We're not going to say that every student is going to be a 1600 scorer on the SAT test.

But that student, when they leave that charter school, if they've met the requirements of the charter, are going to be able to do what it is that they were sent there to do.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. Let me allow other Senators around the circle to have an opportunity to talk about this issue, and announce their support for it. Thank you very much Senator Freedman.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Penn.

SEN. PENN:

Thank you Madam President. I, without a doubt

now, I think I'll probably vote for the bill. I did have some questions Judy, and thank you so much. And I think Senator Bozek's questioning has got to the point and probably got to some of my questions that I wanted to ask.

But in all seriousness too, one of the things I have a difficulty in, is on the fiscal impact. And I do know that on the, and it's even not clear in what I see in trying to get some clarity in it. And Judy, I don't know how much you're going to be able to do with this.

But on, I know that in the ECS part of it, those students in private and parochial schools would not necessarily affect the ECS grant. But I'm just trying to find out what would the fiscal impact be to like a town like Bridgeport, Madam President.

Since I know this would obviously pull some of the dollars off. And again, I am in support, and I won't want to indulge a lot to this and turn off anybody's mind if that's even possible. But is a scary figure in here. And some of these numbers, and it's not very clear of what the impact would be to those students who will still be residing in a town like Bridgeport. If I may, through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Certainly, Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President. In the state charter schools, when we were looking at the formula, and I think we're trying to work on an average of about \$6,000 per pupil that the charter school would get for each one of these students.

Because it would be similar to the vo-tech formula, there are certain cities in this state that probably would not be impacted at all in terms of loss of DCS funding. The areas that might generate more loss would be areas which you wouldn't expect to lose funds.

So that I believe, through you Madam President, the City of Bridgeport probably doesn't get impacted unless they have something like, and I had a run at one point, two or three or four thousand students involved. When you get to that point it would make a difference. But at the numbers that we're talking right now, it doesn't impact.

The other thing that we figured out, and this is why the limitation is at 1,000 students at this point. We're not talking about this current budget that we may be acting on sometime in the next forty-eight, twenty-four, twelve hours. But we're talking about effective

as of July 1, 1997. And we were looking at a figure of a total of \$3 million.

On your local level, your local charter school, if a local charter school converted, that would be an agreement between that local public charter school and the local board of education as to how much money they wanted to spend on these students. So, conceivably they could spend less money if there was a charter written that way. And in one way or another, save Bridgeport again some money.

SEN. PENN:

Thank you. Let me just say this Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Penn, through the Chair please.

SEN. PENN:

Yes, let me just say this Madam President, and I just wanted to thank Senator Freedman, and the rest of my colleagues upstairs, and in the House for their hard work. Representing a city like Bridgeport, and I know that I'm not fully of, I'm just not happy with the equality of students that are coming out.

And I am friends with a lot of teachers there, and the Superintendent of Schools. And I guess we can say that across the State of Connecticut, and looking for some hope, and so not am I going to stand up here and

try to knock something I think, until I can see the difference, and hope it's in a positive manner. I'm not totally enthusiastic about it because I thought more attention should have been paid at this particular time to the quality of schools of education that's currently going on in our total school system.

And those folks who won't have an opportunity to participate in the charter school program, and I do hope it works very well. But I know there's still going to be limited in number, I think twelve, is that correct? And two in each congressional district.

And again, hoping that it works well. But I think we need to take some time and put a greater onus in trying to create activity in our school systems. And also in the quality of education and teaching in the public schools.

And knowing what I see around the City of Bridgeport, and I'm quite sure it's not indigenous to Bridgeport, it's around the state, particularly in urban cities. Deterioration of not just the buildings, but in the teaching, in the product that we're, we're turning out, and to face the regular world.

So, again my hat's off to my colleague. And thank you and I hope it's a success. Thank you Madam President.

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SEN. FREEDMAN:

Madam President, if I may respond back to Senator Penn, because one of the things the bill is very specific about is when the commissioner has to determine where these schools will be located, particularly if they're state or local conversions, that priority school districts would stand the first choice.

And then any institution of higher learning that decides to come in and want to start a charter school in an urban area or a priority school district would also be given priority. And I think that's very, a very key component. Thank you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Williams.

SEN. WILLIAMS:

Thank you Madam President. I rise in support of the Amendment, and the concept for charter schools. I've supported this legislation for the past three years, and I would like to commend Senator Freedman and Senator Sullivan for their very hard work on this issue, not only this year, but in prior years as passed.

And also to commend Senator Freedman for her very good and lengthy explanation of virtually all aspects

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of this bill. I too though, share Senator Penn's concerns, particularly after reading the works of Jonathan Cazal, *Savage Inequalities*, and *Amazing Grace*.

As to the potential for distancing some of the students who need the help most from the resources that we have here in this state. I agree with Senator Penn that we should not look at this as an alternative to working as hard as we can on our entire public school system for the type of innovation and improvement that all students should receive.

For it is true that not only with charter schools in the future, but with the magnet schools that exist now, those choices are available to the students whose parents are active and informed, and place that child in those schools.

And are able to advocate for that child. Not all children are so lucky. And so I would hope that we also redouble our efforts to improve our existing public schools, and not just take a look at alternative such as charter schools.

But in that regard, Madam President, I do believe that there should be and will be a very significant link between charter schools and our public schools. They should not be looked upon as simply a parallel alternative. They should be looked upon as

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laboratories of experiment and innovation that can improve our existing public schools.

We should go forward with the charter schools to see what transpires. To learn from the successes and the failures. And then to replicate those successes in our existing public schools. And I'll tell you, I'm also very pleased to see this charter school legislation tied in with the priority school designation, cause I think that goes a long way to ensure that we're not going to simply create exclusive schools for those who are the best off, for those children who may need the help the least, that we are keying this in to the districts, and the school districts in the State of Connecticut where help is needed most.

So I think that's an excellent provision in this bill. And I'm pleased to support this legislation. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you. Thank you Madam President. Through you Madam President to Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes.

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SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Senator Freedman, I come from a district that's overwhelming opposed to charter schools and vouchers and what not, in my survey. I just, so I'm going to have to go back and explain to them if and why I support this bill.

And I need to know very, very clearly why I should support it. I have a question on, I didn't have as many until Senator Cook spoke, and she raised some legitimate points that I, I am concerned about. And that is, that anybody that wants to get together and say, we think we can do better. How do we know they can do better, and how do we screen these people that think they can do better? Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, and through you Madam President. I believe when people get together to develop a charter for a charter school either at the local level or for a state charter school, that they have to be very inclusive in terms of what it is they're planning on doing in terms of either changing education.

What their major objective is in education? How they're going to finance? How they're going to do all

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this. But ultimately the discretion will be at the local board level if they're going to approve it, to make sure that the questions are all answered before they approve a local conversion.

And then at the state level, there will be certain requirements, I believe, of both the board of ed and the state department, to make sure we're not pulling a sham on people. That we are going to be looking at something that is clearly defined.

And I think that is the best way for me to say, clearly defined in conjunction with what Senator Williams just said. These may very well be laboratories to bring about change within the system.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Senator Freedman, and through you Madam President, then if we approve, or the local board approves a group of people to come in and do their innovative thing, or whatever they're going to do, and they start to develop into the Freeman or the Branch Divisions, or something along those lines. What safeguards do we have at that point?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

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SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. There's an immediate safeguard the minute something goes awry or is not following what the charter says, both at the local level and at the state level. The commissioner immediately can one, put them on notice that their charter is going to be revoked, and they're going to be shut down unless they sit down and immediately correct or remedy what it is that they're doing.

And it could be not complying with their own charter. And two, he can immediately revoke their charter and close the school down. And I think that's a very important concept. Because one of the things we want to make clear is, you're not going to be able to branch off and do things that are not in your charter. Your charter is what we're looking at when we give you approval.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Madam President, so them, through you Madam President, then I'm assuming that that, that everything that they intend, their intentions are all in writing and approved, and if they vary from that, then they will be shut down immediately.

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THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. If not immediately, they will be brought in and a corrective program will be prescribed. If they do not abide by that, he has the right to immediately revoke that charter.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Madam President. And the other concern I have is, why and I asked this to Senator Sullivan, and I wasn't really clear. In our caucus we don't get the time that we really need to go through these things one on one. Is why.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Should have talked to me.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Why fifty percent of the teachers have to be certified and the fifty don't.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President, ultimately all of the teachers will have to be certified within a two-

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year period of time, unless they're under that temporary certification. One of the things that we've discovered, and I think came out of Education before I got on the committee, was that there are people out there who really have a great deal of information, have a skill and would like to teach, but they don't have the teaching certificate because their training was either straight engineering.

It could even be a doctor, could be somebody who has had no educational training whatsoever. They have now decided that they might want to come into this charter school and share their skills with the professionals there. And that is why we offer to them the alternative route of certification, that they must have that after the two-year period when they start their third year of teaching.

So, ultimately they will all be certified. Even, I right now could not go back to teach. My certification has run out. And if I wanted to teach at a charter school next year, I would not be eligible to get into the alternative program. I would hope that they would be able to offer me a temporary certificate for the one year.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

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SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Senator Freedman. So then, the home rule wouldn't apply. We have certain amount of people in Bristol particularly, that think that they know better, and they would prefer to keep their children home. But they don't want to be certified, because they don't think they can qualify to certify.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President, I believe the Senator is right. And, of course, one of the things we're saying in this bill is that those people who home teach would not be eligible either to start a charter school. We haven't addressed the other side of it, but I believe they'd need to have certain credentials in order to be able to teach there.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Madam President, and just one final concern that I have and it happened to me in my town. It might be small, but it did happen. There was Saint Paul High School in Bristol, Connecticut. I don't know if you heard about it, that the Catholic organization

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was about to shut the school down unless they had like a ten or fifteen or twenty more students. It was a very small amount.

Actually what happened, they had to go out and do a major recruiting drive to up that. What impact would a charter school have on a case like that? And what have we done, if anything, to certify or to at least look at how that would impact those schools?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I don't believe that what we're doing with charter schools would have any impact whatsoever. I mean this is going to be parental choice of another public school. And I don't believe that the impact, while I can't account for what the impact would be on the school in your community, but when we're talking about such few numbers, I can't imagine it would make a difference either way.

What I can tell you though is, that any existing school that is not a current public school, would not be able to make themselves a converted charter school. And that is very clear in this legislation.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Madam President, and thank you Senator Freedman. And just one, one last concern. If someone from Waterbury happens to win the lottery and they said they have to go to the Bristol, and the school is in the Bristol area, how do those students get transported back and forth to school?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through this legislation, that would have to be an agreement that would be made between those, the charter school and the student coming from the out-of-district placement, unless it was a regional school and they came to some agreement prior to that. But that would strictly be an agreement between the charter and those parents, or those families.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Madam President, and thank you Senator Freedman. I have no further questions.

THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? Senator Looney.

SEN. LOONEY:

Thank you very much Madam President. Madam President, as an advocate for greater flexibility and the empowerment of families in securing options for the education of their children, I would like very much to commend Senator Freedman and Senator Sullivan and all of those others who worked to build consensus on this bill this year.

I think it is extremely valuable in moving us forward and being responsive to the real needs of families who are desperate, that in many ways they don't find the options available to them in their communities for their education of their children, especially affordable options that they are hoping for.

I do have a couple of questions for Senator Freedman, just for purposes of clarification. Through you Madam President. First of all, the charter school, Senator Freedman, is defined as a public, non-sectarian school. And that applies, of course, both to the local and the state charters.

The description of the content and the flushing out of the requirements beginning in lines, in Section 2C and thereafter, specifies that there will be priority basically, or that there will be, the state board of ed, now speaking about the state chartered schools. State board of ed shall give preference to

applicants who will serve students who reside in priority school districts, which I think is a tremendous thing, because that certainly does benefit those where the need for, for alternatives and reform is coming from the greatest.

But also, and to applicants for state charter schools that are institutions of higher education. And that I think makes a great deal of sense in that colleges in the state who are running elementary or secondary education programs can apply, to themselves have a state charter to operate a school, perhaps on their campus, or nearby.

In effect, as a laboratory for their education majors. One question in that regard, under this then the next section of the bill lays out the requirements under 3D, applications pursuant to the section shall include a description, and enumerates all of the requirements.

In that context of an institution of higher education applying for a charter, would an institution of higher education, which is religiously affiliated like Fairfield University, or Saint Joseph College, or Sacred Heart University. Would they be able to apply for a charter as long as their application for the charter clearly met the requirements that they were

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willing to run a non-sectarian school under the requirements of the charter?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President, I don't believe there's anything in here that would prevent them from seeking a charter for a non-sectarian type of school. As long as they were not going to espouse their views on the students that were attending that school. And that it would like any other public school that we currently have in terms of everything else. I don't believe that they could be denied, unless, of course, they're number twenty-five on a list of twenty-four.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SEN. LOONEY:

Right. Thank you Madam President, and thank you Senator Freedman. So it is your understanding, Senator Freedman, that the enumeration of the qualifications of what the applicants would have to guarantee by their charter, and meet the state standards, would be governing, not the particular nature of the entity, as long as it was a non-profit. So that a religiously affiliated institution of higher education, as long as

it was willing to meet whatever standards were set by the state board of ed, would be as eligible as any other non-religiously affiliated institution, to make that application.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President, that would be my understanding.

SEN. LOONEY:

Thank you very much Senator Freedman. And through you Madam President, just one additional question. Would there be anything in the process, Senator Freedman, that would prevent an entity that applied for a local charter, say that they will, some group locally came forward and said, we would apply for a charter to convert a local public school into a local charter school and be under the jurisdiction of the local board.

If that was refused, would there be anything that would prevent that same group from applying for a state charter, and applying, and trying it that way. In other words, would their status be in any way prejudiced by a previous denial at the local level?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President, I believe once a local board of education has denied at the local level, there would be no recourse. Because you're talking about an existing public school in that district, controlled by that local board of education. So, I believe if they were rejected at that level, there would be no recourse for a lot of reasons.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SEN. LOONEY:

Yes, thank you Madam President, just to maybe to clarify my question a little more to Senator Freedman. If that denial occurred, a group applying for a local charter was denied by the local school board, I think it's clear that they would not have any recourse to try to get a local charter through the state.

But could that same group alter its plan somewhat then if it identified another facility, rather than the local school, to apply then for a state charter. And would their denial of the local permit in any way prejudice their revised application for a state charter?

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Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I don't believe there is anything in this bill that would prohibit that from happening. If they're a group that wants to put together a charter school, and although they may have been denied when they worked within the local level to convert an existing school, but they feel they want to go ahead and form a new charter school, they would then write their application, and write their charter and direct it to the State Department of Education.

And I don't believe that there would be any prejudice against them for having been denied at the first level. It may have been for the reason there may not have been a lot of people interested. And whereas, if they go this route, there may be more people interested. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SEN. LOONEY:

Thank you very much for that response, and for the thorough explication of the bill. And commendations again Senator Freedman on your excellent work. This is a great benefit to the state. And thank you Madam President.

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THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? Senator Prague. Senator Prague you were up before.

SEN. PRAGUE:

Thank you Madam President. I have been listening very intently to this discussion on this very critical issue. And I want to thank you Senator Freedman very much for all the information and for your sincere belief that this is going to improve the educational system in this state.

I am, like you are, an old school teacher, or a former school teacher, and I'm very nervous about the fact that we're going to begin to fragment our system of public education with this proposal for charter schools.

You said early in the discussion that if there were 1,500 students who applied and 200 could be admitted, you know, I'm concerned about what's going to happen to the rest, the other 1,300. I'm also concerned about the fact that we don't have enough money to fund our public schools.

We've cut back now this year on the ECS funding. I know the charter schools will not be implemented for another two years, but I'm concerned that there isn't enough money now to allow districts, or to help fund

districts, to buy the technology, all the equipment that they need.

We don't have enough money to make our public schools better equipped, and yet we're offering a brand new concept. I'm hard pressed to not vote for this because it's sounds like it is a better system, but it seems to me it'll just be a better system for a few, when we need to make a better system for all of our kids.

There will only be a few of the kids who will be able to benefit, and the rest of the kids will be left in a situation that we will not be concentrating on to make better. And I, I don't know. I think this is one of the most crucial votes this year, frankly.

I think it's going to change the way we deliver education in our state. And I don't know, I guess if we could offer enough charter schools so that every kid would have an opportunity to choose a charter school. If there were enough placements for everybody, then I wouldn't be so nervous about the fact that we're going to leave so many kids stuck in situations that these charter schools are being set up to get away from.

So, I would like you to comment, Senator Freedman, through you Madam President, as to what you see the future bringing the rest of the kids who will not be

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able to take drawing of his own innovative programs.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I would like to be able to assure you that we don't want to deprive any child in this state of the equal access and equality and type of education. What we're trying to do by opening this door, is to move in another direction that maybe every single student in this state will benefit from in the long run.

Because of things through a charter school come out with a different final version of what that student looks like when they're through. Will the public schools in that community now take a look and try to make appropriate changes? I think they will.

If it's geared for success for whatever the program is that they may be offering, we don't want to go whole hog and jump in and say, every school. Because we haven't got any history yet. It's far too new a concept in this state.

So that was why I made the comment early on that these are laboratories right now. And if the laboratories are successful then I see great changes

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that will be demanded by everybody else within the framework of the public school system.

If they don't succeed, then we have to go back and rethink what we're doing. I'm optimistic. I think we can bring about change in a very subtle way, starting with smaller groups. And this would be what I would call a pilot. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SEN. PRAGUE:

Thank you Madam President. I have another question. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Proceed.

SEN. PRAGUE:

Senator Freedman, will the charter schools also have to take a percentage of handicapped children?

THE CHAIR:

Sorry, Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. We are not saying there are any quotas. Anybody who wants to go to that school must be accepted at that school. The only limitation is if they go above 250 students, they have to draw the line. Which is why I made the example

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about visiting the school in Boston. It was done strictly on the lottery basis.

They had no idea who was going to be at that door until the lottery numbers were chosen, and they met the students, and they found out that they had special ed students. And they accommodated those special ed students even though they're sort of geared in a different direction, they felt that their school must include all those children, and the children of the parents who wanted their children there.

And so they accommodated those students. I see that happening in our charter schools when they go on board. That was why I made a couple of times, a reference to non-discrimination, non-quota. But I think we can get a balance just because it's a free for all. If they're going to be more than 200 people applying, there's a lottery. Through you Madam President

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SEN. PRAGUE:

Thank you Senator Freedman. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Anything further? Senator Harp.

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SEN. HARP:

Thank you Madam President. And I too want to commend you for this work, Senator Freedman, and also for your diligence and your patience as we examine this change in our system, and how it might impact the state and the children of our state.

I was looking at the fiscal note and I thought perhaps you could help me a little bit. And it talks about an ECS offset. And then it gets pretty complicated. And I was wondering if you could explain to me exactly how that works?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President, when we worked on the file copy of the bill, we were working under a different type of formula. We were working under the vo-ag model. We have then since switched to go over to the vo-tech. So what you should be looking at on that fiscal note are the lines at the bottom which tell you the actual amount of money that we will be spending.

I'm not sure why when we go from a file copy to an Amendment the fiscal notes are written that way. But the actual bottom part is what we're talking about now. I think it's the last five or six lines. Through you

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Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Thank you Madam President. Through you Madam President, I'm understanding then that the cost would be around about \$2.3 - \$3 million if the offsets work according to the averages.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, again through you Madam President. We're talking a total of about \$2.9 - \$3 million. It's not even an offset at this point. This is money that the state would send to that state charter school. This is the state charter school. At the local level the only amount of money, and we don't have that in the fiscal note because until a charter, a local school converts to a charter school, that would come from local tax dollars as agreed upon between the Board of Education and the local.

So there really is not any, I mean that offset was because we had planned it one way in the file copy, and now we're looking at it in a different fashion. That is not really any offset. We're talking about \$3

million total that would go in, about an average of \$6,000 per pupil for a state-run charter school.

Whatever the local decides would be a very different ball game that we don't control right now at all. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Thank you. So that, through you Madam President, the ECS funding has little or nothing to do with the funding of the state, as well as the, well probably would have something to do with the local, but not the state chartered schools. Is that right?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes. Through you Madam President. Any child who attends a state charter school, they would not be counted in the ECS funding that would go to the local community. But because we're working under that particular vocational technical formula, certain communities would have to have a lot of their students in that charter school before there would be any loss of their ECS dollars. Whereas at the local charter school level, all those students are counted in the ECS

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count.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Thank you. Through you Madam President. Just another question. Can students outside of the district go to a charter school? Or, is it just within a school district, even for the state chartered schools? How would it work in each case?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I think that would be up to the individual charter. There could be regional charter schools. There could be just a, on the conversion, it could be at the local level, but we do have regional schools that might want to take a look at this option.

It could be a school within a school. Or, whatever the arrangements are, they would all be worked out in that charter, when the application is put forward, either at the local or the state level.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Thank you Madam President, through you. Could the proponent describe the criteria that the state, I guess, Board of Education, or department, will use in selecting which applications will be chartered?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes. Through you Madam President. I believe we direct the Department of Education to develop some standards for that particular. We felt that we would not be on our, or anyone else's best interest if we did that through legislation, that they would be better equipped.

What we do say though is, because at some point we limit it to twenty-four, twelve public, and twelve state charter schools. That the commissioner will then have to look at where these schools are geographically. Are there more than two in each district where we allow them?

Are there more than four in a congressional district? And that all of those items will have to be weighed out. So that's a little bit of a criteria that immediately gives the commissioner something that he must determine. We have built a time frame into this so that when he has all those applications, he weighs

if he had a priority school district versus a Westport. The priority school district would get the weighing in terms of being able to get the charter. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Thank you Madam President, through you. The first twenty-four schools operate for two years. And what happens after that?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. The way it's developed right now, actually they could have charters that will be for up to five years, and they could be renewed for another five years. The only thing that we've addressed in here would be that when we go into the next budget cycle, the 1997-99 budget cycle, that the budgeting from our perspective will be for the two years for the state charter schools. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

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Thank you. And how will the number of schools, how will we increase the number of schools that can receive charters? And when can that happen? And I guess, upon what criteria will that be determined?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. We could be back here next year expanding. Unfortunately, the first charter school will not be able to open until July 1, 1997. And as we were constructing this, we realized it takes time to plan this kind of school.

So therefore we're talking a year into the future. A year into the future they will also know what state dollars will be available, and if they're available. And they'll be able to go forward for a state charter. I think at any times the legislature decides, and they're in session, and they wanted to expand, they certainly could. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Thank you Madam President, through you, a couple more questions and then a comment. Could you describe, could the proponent describe the research and

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evaluation component of the charter schools program, how much it will cost, and if it is a formal process or an informal process that just occurs within the State Board of Education.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. We have a process in place here which the applicant must follow. It starts on Line 75, the mission must be stated in the application. The interest, this may be for state, I'm sorry. Well the interest in the community for the establishment of the charter school, how it will be governed.

There will be a governing council of all charter schools once they go on line. They have to tell how they're going to get their teachers. How they're going to be run. They have to give a fiscal financial background, and how they're planning on supporting the school.

What the qualifications and number of teachers will be. What the organization of the school will be. I think it gives you a very long list of laundry items there that we felt would cover the application process. And as I said, I believe that's at the local level.

And then it goes on to the state level. And I think the commissioner will have a great deal of leeway as he's going through these, because it's a new process for all of us. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Through you Madam President. I was looking at the other side of the process. After the school has been functioning for a while, it's already gotten its charter. It's been function for a while. We've heard that it's, this is kind of a piloted program that we don't know for sure what its impact will be.

And since each charter will be different, is there a mechanism in place to measure the success of the charter school at reaching the state's educational goal as well as the charter's stated mission. And what is that process?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. One of the criteria will be the State Mastery Test, obviously. Their students will be required to take the test. They will also be required to profile their school to the

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State Department of Education, so that they can be compared to the other schools in the district as well as the state.

And if at any time, anybody makes a complaint, it would go directly to the commissioner. He can then come in, take a look at what's going on. See if it's resolvable, and sit down and correct it. And as I said earlier, or revoke the application.

I think though that in terms of their own goals and strategies, that will be part of what will also have to be built into their charter. They're going to have to show in that charter how they're going to measure either the change that they're anticipating, the growth they're anticipating, that will be part of their charter application, I would believe. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Harp.

SEN. HARP:

Thank you Madam President, and thank you Senator Freedman. I have got to say to this body that I have been very conflicted about the charter school program. When the bill first came out, and I guess all of the previous bills I voted against, and when the bill first came out and there was for-profit opportunities, there

wasn't a strong teacher certification initiative.

There wasn't a need for Mastery scores. There wasn't local public board of education opportunity to participate in any way. I was certainly going to oppose it again. I still have some concerns. I'm concerned that as we begin to change the system that we change it at a time when we're fiscally less able to do so.

But I believe that I will vote for this bill because I know that we've got to try new things and that we shouldn't really be afraid of change. I would hope that the same energy that has gone into passing this bill, and creating this specialized opportunity will now be, will now go to the overall public educational system.

I think that public, and I mean aside from charter schools, because it is actually a public educational system, part of it too, a new part. But I would hope that we do that because we're really talking on the state side about a thousand students, and probably a few students on the local side.

And the vast majority of students, particularly students in my district deserve an opportunity. And for them public education, regular public education is the only opportunity that they have to escape the

confines of poverty, and to participate in our brave new world of the twenty-first century.

So, on the note that we will give as much, if not more energy to improving that system, I will vote on behalf of this bill.

THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? Senator Coleman.

SEN. COLEMAN:

Thank you Madam President. Madam President, I am another who has wavered in terms of support for this particular concept, and this particular bill, for many of the reasons that have been expressed by Senator Prague.

I have some concern regarding the impact that charter schools would have on the public school systems, particularly in districts such as the ones that I represent, districts including towns such as the ones that I represent.

And I wonder what will become of, as others have said, those students who are left behind in the public schools, that is one of my concerns. And I also perceive that in the existing fiscal climate of this state, and in the foreseeable future that there will be limited resources available to spread among all of the schools in the state, whether they be public schools or

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magnet schools, or charter schools.

And I have this concern that in allocating those resources or dollars that, in diverting them in one place it detracts from what could be done in other places, particularly the public schools. But I must say I am encouraged by the concept expressed by Senator Freedman and Senator Williams that the charter schools should be looked upon as laboratories, and that we can possibly glean from our experience with charter schools those positive things that might occur that we could perhaps incorporate or apply to the public schools.

And, I wonder if we find that the public schools and the bureaucracy that's attached to those public schools, is part of the problem, part of the hindrance, what could possibly be done to make the public schools perhaps as flexible as the charter schools. And I don't know whether Senator Freedman has any thought about that or not. But I'd like to pose that question, if I may, to Senator Freedman.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I would hope that if we see something like that and we realize that more flexibility will be needed, or is needed, and that

would make a great difference in the world of education, that we would respond to that and say, let's sit back and get rid of those things that are blocking.

Let's eliminate those things that are blocking progressive education, quality education, opportunity for all of our students. And I think we can learn from all of this. And I would be the first one once we can identify what those things are, to go forward to seek those changes.

Because I think it's important. And this will give us that record. I still look at these as public schools, just in another form. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Coleman.

SEN. COLEMAN:

Thank you Senator Freedman. I have another question which I'd like to pose to you, Madam President to Senator Freedman. And it is perhaps very consistent with the dialogue which occurred between Senator Harp and Senator Freedman.

Am I correct in understanding that the bill before us provides for a two-year pilot program? And if that is the case, I'm a little concerned about what would happen after the expiration of the two years and beyond

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that. I'm somewhat concerned given the limited amount of resources that are available through the state, as I had indicated earlier.

What would happen if there is any proliferation of the charter school approach in the State of Connecticut particularly given those limited resources? Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President. I believe we're still talking about charters that extend beyond two years. But because we go into a two-year budget cycle in the next biennium, that was what I was talking about, and I probably used the wrong word when I said pilot.

But we know that we would like to anticipate \$3 million in that next cycle to spend on the state charter schools. But they themselves can be chartered from anywhere from two to five years, and hopefully for a five year period. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Coleman.

SEN. COLEMAN:

Thank you Madam President. Thank you Senator Freedman. I guess my concern is I'm not aware from the

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explanation of the bill whether or not the General Assembly would have any opportunity after the effect of this particular bill if it passes, takes place, to revisit the concept of charter schools prior to the expansion of additional charter schools in the state beyond what is provided for in the bill. So, I'm hopeful that Senator Freedman could help me with that. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. For the record, although there is nothing in the bill, I think it would behoove the General Assembly. Certainly two years down the road to review everything with the Commissioner of Education and the State Department of Education before moving further.

And as I said, it doesn't say that in the bill, but I believe there are enough structures that would make that happen. And I would go on the record for saying that I would like to see that happen. That there must be an evaluation before we proceed to expand any of this. I mean, I'm a very strong believer that you have proof before you start going out and making things bigger. Through you Madam President.

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THE CHAIR:

Senator Coleman.

SEN. COLEMAN:

Thank you Senator Freedman. I think today I'm made a bit more comfortable through the explanations provided by Senator Freedman, and some of the comments of my colleagues, and what's contained in the Amendment.

I can't say that all of my misgivings are completely resolved, but I think I among those who have had some great concerns about the condition of our public school system, and the need for reform of that public school system so that the students that are enrolled in that system are better served.

This seems to me to be one way that we can experiment, if you will, concerning what may work, and what may benefit if applied to the existing public school system for the improvement and reform of that system.

I'm not sure all of my misgivings or reservations can be addressed or eliminated, but I would say that I am a bit more comfortable about the charter school system and like my other colleagues I want to extend my commendations to Senator Freedman and Senator Sullivan, all those who worked on this bill. I think it's a good

effort. Thank you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? Senator Prague.

SEN. PRAGUE:

Thank you Madam President. Through you to Senator Freedman. Senator Freedman.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman, through please.

SEN. PRAGUE:

Briefly, I know you must be tired. This year we reduced the ECS grant by, what was it a half-of-one-percent, or one percent across the board? I have a fear that the money that will be needed for these charter schools, the state chartered schools, will further reduce the money that is available to fund the ECS grant and the other educational costs that are needed by the public school.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. Two things, one, the co-chair and I of the Education Committee have written to the Equity Committee to reexamine all the school formulas and take a look at all the various formulas out there. So that I can't at this time say

there's going to be an immediate impact, since this is not going to be in the current budget.

But I do have a very strong feeling that we're still talking public school here. This money is going into a public school. It could be a charter school in Hartford, run by the City of Hartford. It could be a charter school in your town, run by some other group.

But it's still a public school, and it's still public money being spent on our students that are in the public school. So I don't see that as an impact overall on your ECS grants, because you still have to educate these children. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SEN. PRAGUE:

Through you Madam President, to you Senator Freedman. So we can be, I guess not assured, cause you're never sure of anything, but it is not the plan to reduce the funding that is currently going to the existing public schools in order to fund the new public schools?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. It is not the

intent to steal from one to give to the other. But as I view it on the spectrum of things, we're still talking about a certain amount of money that's going into a community.

Plus, I see it as additional funds for these new schools, or new type of public school. So in many ways it's not my intention to steal from ECS to support this. It's my intention that this be additional funding above and beyond that. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

SEN. PRAGUE:

Through you Madam President, thank you Senator Freedman.

THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Through you Madam President. I have a couple more questions that I didn't get to before, but, thank you. Senator Freedman, like many children in our families, the children in our school have to be, have special needs. And children in some families are able to excel while some children in the families do not. It appears that there's quite a bit of emphasis and discussion on

the earlier remarks that I made where I referenced, we want to help the children to succeed, but we're not referencing the additional help for children who need to excel.

Having different children in the family, I think it's very important that while one youngster has great need, to some degree how somebody might view him at a distance, or her, the other child over here is able to have greater accomplishment. And that child needs the same nurturing but at a different level.

I don't see that in this particular bill. While, as I said earlier, we are trying to enhance our public school because of the difficulty we experienced. Can you explain how those children who need help in excelling, who will make the larger difference in our society, have an opportunity to benefit from this program?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President. I would assume that the charter school, and the charter would say that we are going to work with this child, we want to make this child not only work up to his or her full potential, but beyond that. If I'm hearing Senator Bozek

correctly. But I think in public education today, be it in a charter, public or state, or local board of education, every teacher has made that commitment to every child in their classroom.

And I would be the first one to say that not all children are the same, and each must be taught differently. And I would suspect that when a charter is drafted, I would believe that that would be a large component in that charter.

So that, therefore, they would accommodate the child who is average and moving along, and the child who needs greater challenge to be successful. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. If that's the fact, if that is the fact, why don't we have that help, and why isn't it recognized in our public school system today?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Madam President, I do believe our public schools are trying to do this today. I think they're trying to accommodate each child's needs. I think there are an

awful lot of other pressures though, and for one reason or another, a local board of education has expanded their curriculum. We require certain things that must be taught. We at the state say you have to do this, this and this.

And we're putting constraints on them. And we're saying now well let's try a different way. Let's move away from those constraints. I don't think the teachers will be any different. But I think what they want to do in their classroom may be different because of the children and the parents' involvement in that classroom.

And, through you Madam President, I think Senator Bozek knows as well as I am, that it takes a commitment from parents in order to make something to succeed. And that's true both at the local public school education level, as well as anything we might want to try that would be different.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. I do recognize that it takes, everything is parents. I recognize that. And yet in our school system we even though they have all these expanded programs in some areas, what we have is

we have homogeneousness. If that's a correct word. And therefore, while they might have a program it's not directed, it's not designed for young children, or children in school who have the ability to excel.

All the programs that we keep hearing about are to try to help the young children who are, need help pulling up their boot straps. We have no help for the other children. And no where in this particular bill does it say that we are going to make provisions in this area, in education, to improve, to make sure that young children who can excel, who will make our country strong, who will be the leaders. Is there any language in this bill to make sure that they are insulated or protected or helped in their education?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I don't think I can guarantee to you what the charter is going to say. But I would suspect no matter what it is, any school, public charter, state charter, they're going to want to show improvement.

It could be at the excelling level for your higher motivated student. Or it could be at the lower level for the non-achieving student, or the about to be drop

out student. I don't write the charter, so therefore I can't say in the bill that this is what you must do.

The charter will control, and if they want to have students that they feel must be pushed harder in order to be able to achieve more, that will be written in the charter. That will be approved either by the local board of education for a conversion, or the state board of education for a state school.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. If that might be the case, what you just said. If that might be the case, then the children who would be, who would apply of course by lottery, once they're in place, and they're in this learning motif, what happens, because some parents they want to send, I want to send my Johnny there because this school says it's going to be for the best.

He gets selected. Obviously by lottery, some kids aren't going to be selected. But he arrives and he doesn't perform. What is the alternative in order to make this school successful in its succeeding year. Can this Johnny be disallowed in a succeeding year? Can he be moved out?

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THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. I would say that if the charter says they're going to do such and such, and they get a student who doesn't quite meet that, that student still has the right to stay in that school. And that charter school will have to get the personnel to work with Johnny, who isn't quite as apt as Suzy Q, but will still be allowed to stay in that school, because his parents, or her parents want him to stay in that school.

Therefore, the school must provide, just as they have to provide for special ed child. Let me give you a for instance Senator Bozek. We have a school that's going to concentrate on the arts in one form or another.

Now you and I both know that not all children are created either musically, dance wise, artistically, but my daughter wants to go to that school. She's won the lottery. I allow her to go to that school. That school takes her. And guess what? She may not have any of those attributes, but she's learning all about these things because she's interested in how other people can do these things. She's going to learn about

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music. She's going to learn about dance. She's going to learn about art.

But she may never be an artist, a dancer, or a musician. And as long as she's happy and learning in that school, and she is comfortable, I'm going to keep her there, and so would you. The minute she says to me, Mom suddenly I realize I don't have any talent, I don't belong here, could I go back to where I had been before? Then I'll pull her out. But I won't allow the school to kick her out.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. So, what you're saying is, we have a school that has a charter that says we're aiming at this excellence, and through the lottery we wind up getting bad choice one year, we get a large group of youngsters who really don't perform in what was really designed or hoped for in this charter.

And the teachers are working hard at it. But the children aren't really doing what works out. And unfortunately, these children have to stay in the school for that whole duration. And therefore the intent of the school to help propel and succeed, in whatever the goals were designed in the charter,

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aren't, are unable to be enhanced or improved until each succeeding year when a new group of children comes in at a different, at a low grade. Would that be correct?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Madam President, maybe we can put this to rest right now. Each child may move at a different level. As long as they're moving toward that goal, whatever it may be that you feel is excelling. As long as you're moving upward. I think the school is fulfilling its obligation.

And if those children and their parents are happy with that, then they're fulfilling their obligation. We cannot say -- you're out of here. As long as they're moving and they're happy, and they're doing what they say they're going to be doing in the charter, it could be half an inch for one child, just as it is in the public schools today. Or, it could be three feet for another child when it comes to academic growth. But as long as the growth is happening, that's all we can control.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

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SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President, through you. The youngster, is there any provision for aptitude qualification for any of the programs in this school?

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

The way the bill is written, there can be no testing of the students who will be coming into the school based on, we only want the best and the brightest. That is why I said it's a non-discrimination. The door is open to anybody who wants to send their child there, no matter what the curriculum may be. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you, through you Madam President. With regard to the lottery, do we know if the lottery is out of a hat, or do we know if the lottery is through a committee which will make decisions to have all, whatever the terms are used, in order to select children from different groups and different areas.

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Will a lottery truly be out of a hat, or will the lottery be on a pre-selected group actually designed by a committee?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. I could see Friday night at ten o'clock, we'll all turn on TXX and we'll watch for those balls to jump up and we'll know which students are going to be selected.

SEN. BOZEK:

I resent that.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

No, we have not put in the language how you do the lottery. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you. Well, I think that's one of the major failing areas then. That doesn't mean I can't support it, but, who designs the, you're saying if I want my youngster to get to this school over here, and it's a lottery system, because a lot of people are going to pin their hopes on it saying -- look I live in this neighborhood, the best thing I can afford is this

public school, which a lot of people want to get their kids out of.

And a charter school arrives, at least they want is a shot to get their, at least they want is a chance to get a shot at having their name pulled out of a hat. But if there's going to be a committee which is designed to say look, let's take all the names in, and Judy Freedman and Tom Bozek and Kevin Sullivan will sit on the committee and they'll pile them up by different criteria, and we'll close our eyes and take a little out of each pile. That's different than a lottery.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. I believe as part of the charter, and the governing board that those details should not be written into legislation but should be determined by the council of the school as to how they're going to establish a lottery that will be fair, and treat everybody equally. I don't think we'd have to go about legislating that. Through you Madam President:

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

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Through you Madam President. Is lottery used in the Amendment?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. Yes, the word lottery is on Line 98.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Through you Madam President. Is lottery defined in the Amendment?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

No, through you Madam President. Lottery is not defined.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. In so doing, Senator Freedman, I think that while anything is an enhancement to our public school system for our public, the idea of getting the public engaged in spending some money, and taking these long arduous years to get these things

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out, should have some significant change and difference so that they can pin their hopes on.

And the fact that if there is an opportunity for their youngster, and it is lottery, they're in line like anybody else. One of the things I suspect here is that lotteries will not, because it's not defined, then lotteries itself might be, might be left to the fact that it's going to be left to the state, or some committee.

Now, let me ask you, I asked you about children failing, is lottery out of a hat. Let me ask you Senator Freedman is the, are these schools, in the Amendment is regional, or regionalization referred to in this Amendment?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. Any current local, or regional school board that exists would be eligible for a local public school conversion.

SEN. BOZEK:

Okay, does that mean.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek, through the Chair please.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President, through you. Does that mean that if somebody opens a charter school, an organization or group, does that it mean that it's intended, that it can be a regional school?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. If it was going to be a state charter school, they could so designate themselves if they wanted to serve a region as opposed to a school district. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Bozek.

SEN. BOZEK:

Thank you Madam President. I had some questions in that regard. I was, I want to tread on regionalization and I'm not into it. There's a number of questions I have. I've been, we've been at this thing quite a while.

I wanted to get on record some of the, some of the refrains from the questions that I asked in order that at a subsequent time when improvements or critiquing might be necessary so that I can reflect back on the hopes that were reflected in statements that you made to questions that were asked by the body. I'd like to

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make, I'd like to say that while I'm of course planning to support this like most of my colleagues, if not all, the question here is, do we have a product that in essence gives the public some hope so that next time if this isn't quite doing it, next time somebody says well let's call this school something a little different, and if people are suspect that it doesn't appear that it's going to do anything good, and it's going to take another three or four years to come up with some ideas, my hope in seeing these types of schools is that children who can perform in excellence have an opportunity to demonstrate that, can benefit our state.

What we have here is just a hope that under a different scheme, we'll be able to direct youngsters who are of the same homogeneous makeup in our public school systems now, crossing our fingers that it's going to come out better.

I do want to thank you for your responses, and for all the work that you have put into this program along with all the other names that are on the Amendment including your own, Senator Eads, in the effort that you made, I want to thank you very much for your remarks Senator Freedman.

THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? Senator Colapietro.

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SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Madam President. I'll be brief I hope. You know, this is something new to us, you work on it all the time, so you have all the answers, understandably. When I go back to my district I'd like to explain why I voted the way I do.

One of the concerns, I'd like to ask you, if a group of teachers in a school today, local or state or high school whatever, decided to get together as a group of teachers and say we'd like to try something innovative and new. Would they be prevented from doing that now?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Through you Madam President. That's all determined by their local board of education and their superintendent, so I can't answer it. I don't think they would be precluded, but they'd have to go through certain routines in order to be able to make that happen.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you Senator Freedman. That would raise a

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question in my mind that we are somewhat tapping the ECS, the monies for public schools. We're going to hit them somewhere along the line whether it be small or large. I know my towns are screaming that they don't have enough money for education now.

If they're able to do that now, I don't know why we are going through all this extravaganza, and I wish you wouldn't use the word laboratory any more, because I think of guinea pigs. And I don't want to think of kids as guinea pigs.

But it is an experiment. I don't see why we couldn't just order a school or two to say look, come up with some innovative ideas, see what you can do amongst your own. I've got a real problem with spending state money or interfering when we have the potential right there to do it right now, in my eyes anyway. Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, through you Madam President. I believe that's probably very true, but unfortunately has not happened. I think this may force the issue and allow people to sit down and start thinking in a different fashion. And what this would be, would be the

catalyst. It would not only allow certain groups if they wanted to not have to go through an arduous process of fighting everybody to bring this on line, but coming together with equal mind, trying to figure out how they were going to do this, and putting it together.

And I, as I said, I see this as a catalyst, an impetus to bring about change. And it can happen in these twelve schools as well as in the current system. Nobody seems to be taking a real handle on it right now. So I see this as -- let's get the show moving. If it's working, if something good is coming out of it, other people are going to sit down and put their creative heads together to do it within the framework of their own system also.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Colapietro.

SEN. COLAPIETRO:

Thank you. Thank you Senator Freedman. I wholeheartedly agree with you, nobody's taking the bull by the horns. And I think maybe that would be the way to go rather than go through the charter school. Maybe we should take the bull by the horns and say to these people -- if you don't then something's going to happen, or budgets are going to be cut or whatever.

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But thank you for your answer Senator Freedman, I appreciate it.

THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? Senator Genuario.

SEN. GENUARIO:

Thank you Madam President. Very briefly, I just wanted to extend my support for this bill and to congratulate Senator Freedman and Senator Sullivan on the hard work that they have done. I believe that this bill gives a tremendous opportunity for success. And a potential for success and new ideas in innovation that may be lacking as a result of the current structure of public education.

And to the extent that we see successes in small steps through this process, those successes can be transferred and transplanted into our traditional public school setting, or into a growth of other charter schools.

To be sure there is always, when you try something different, there is always the chance that there will be failures. But if we're afraid of failure, we will never succeed, and we will never grow. This bill is an excellent attempt to make changes and opportunities and successes for public education. And I'm delighted with the work of Senator Freedman and Senator Sullivan. And

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I'm equally delighted that I think it's quite possible that the House might vote on this this year. So, thank you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you Madam President. I too, would like to stand and support the work of Senator Freedman and Senator Sullivan. They have, over the years that I have been in the Senate, certainly championed this issue.

I expect that we will get a vote down in the House on this. And as a parent of children who are in public school, I see this as a truly great opportunity for improvement in the public school system in Connecticut which I find certainly is top notch.

I think that this can only further improve upon a very good public school system in Connecticut. And hopefully with a vote on this today we can get downstairs fast, and get a vote on it. Thank you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Any further comments? If not, I'll try your minds. We're voting on Amendment 5469, to Calendar 323. All those in favor signify by saying aye?

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SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed? I think the aye's have it, Senator Daily. But thanks for your effort. Senator Freedman.

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President. Any other Amendments bearing my name should be withdrawn. And I don't believe the Clerk has any further Amendments. I believe since we've had this long discussion, and I hope I've been able to clarify the issues for everybody, I believe we're ready to vote. And I suspect that it will not be able to go on Consent. So I move that we vote on it.

THE CHAIR:

You want a roll call that is?

SEN. FREEDMAN:

Yes, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk would you announce a pendency of a roll call please.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the chamber. An immediate roll call has been ordered in

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the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the chamber.

THE CHAIR:

The machine is now open, you may cast your vote.

(Senator Rennie in the Chair)

THE CHAIR:

If all Senators have voted, the Clerk may close the machine.

THE CLERK:

Total Number Voting	35
Necessary for Passage	18
Those Voting Yea	28
Those Voting Nay	7

THE CHAIR:

The bill is passed.

SEN. FLEMING:

Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you Mr. President. And I would ask for a suspension to immediately transmit this item to the House.

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THE CHAIR:

If there's no objection, so ordered. Would the Clerk return to the Call of the Calendar.

THE CLERK:

Page 7, Calendar 491, Substitute for HB5361, File 330, and 698. AN ACT INCREASING HOME OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES (amended by House Amendment Schedule "A"). Favorable Report of Committee on Housing, Planning and Development, and Finance. Clerk has two Amendments.

SEN. FLEMING:

Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fleming.

SEN. FLEMING:

Yes, thank you Mr. President. I would ask that this item be passed temporarily please.

THE CHAIR:

The item shall be passed temporarily.

THE CLERK:

Page 8, Calendar 501, HB5478, File 435, 718. AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH TO WORK DAY (as amended by House Amendment "A" and "B"). Favorable Report of Committee on Children, and Government Administration and Election. Clerk has one Amendment.

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DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Bill as amended passes. Clerk please call  
Calendar 593.

CLERK:

On page 14, Calendar 593, substitute for Senate  
Bill Number 59. AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC CHARTER  
SCHOOLS. As amended by Senate amendment schedule "A."  
Favorable report of the committee on Appropriations.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move  
acceptance of the Joint Committee's favorable report  
and passage of the bill in concurrence with the Senate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Questions on acceptance and passage, will you  
remark?

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to  
call LCO 5469, previously designated as Senate "A" and  
I be permitted to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Will Clerk please call LCO 5469 previously  
designated Senate amendment schedule "A."

CLERK:

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LCO 5469, Senate "A" offered by Senator Freedman,  
etal.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Just a moment Representative Staples. The Chamber will come to order, we're getting a little bit out of hand. I would ask staff and guests please come to the well of the House, if you have a conversation take them outside of the Chamber. I would ask that we take our conversations outside of the Chamber. Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've asked leave to summarize, so I'll briefly summarize this amendment and then speak on it because this amendment in essence is the bill. This amendment, members of the Chamber, is the result of very lengthy negotiations throughout the course of this session, and quite frankly over the last few years as charter schools has been an issue that the Education Committee has grappled with in the past but has never reached consensus on to be able to bring this to the House floor for a vote.

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This amendment summarizes, or rather describes in the definitional section in section one, what charter schools are. And I think that alone has been a subject of a lot of discussion.

It defines local charter schools and state charter schools, two different forms of charter schools that this proposal would authorize. Section two describes in detail who may apply for a charter school and under what conditions the state board of education may grant charters.

It also describes in section 2d what the application for a charter school must contain, what specific criteria would be looked to by the local boards of education and the state board of education when approving or disapproving a charter school.

In subsection H of section 2 of this bill, it talks about the revocation if a charter school fails to perform that the state commissioner has the authority to do that. To revoke their charter.

In section three of the bill describes the accountability provisions of charter schools. Requiring that school profiles be filed annually with the state commissioner of education and that there would also be extensive annual reports on a variety of other criteria for evaluating the condition of a

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chartered school.

Section 4 discusses in more detail the nature of the collective bargaining provisions that pertain to charter schools. Section 5 relates to the funding provisions that provide for local and state charter schools. Section 6 relates to the legal obligations for contracting the charter schools have and the lack of legal liability that local boards of education have.

And the final section of the bill, Mr. Speaker deal with the provisions for temporary certification for teachers who were hired after a certain date prior to the start of the school year. Mr. Speaker that completes my summary and I'd like to at this time complete the summary and ask that I might be permitted to comment further on the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Move adoption please.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

I move adoption of the amendment Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER HYSLOP:

Question is on adoption, will you remark?

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Mr. Speaker, many have come to me in the last few months as we have negotiated this bill with far more effort and diligence on the Education Committee than

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we've had in previous years in an attempt to bring this to the floor and ask why are we doing a charter school bill at all.

And I think just to start the debate, rather than getting into the specifics, I think it's worth illustrating what charter schools is and why the proponents, myself included, feel this is something the state of Connecticut should embark on this year.

As many of the people in this Chamber remember, three years ago we asked a broad based commission of educators, businessmen, legislators and others--The Connecticut Educational Excellence Commission--to spend 18 months studying education issues and come back with recommendations for reforms that would improve the quality of education in this state.

That commission reported back a comprehensive piece of legislation that to the dismay of many in this Chamber never reached the floor for debate due to some controversy surrounding one provision of that proposal.

Over the last two years though, the education committee has implemented many of those provisions, recommended by that comprehensive commission on educational excellence.

To name a few, that commission was the first to recommend that we establish technology grants for our

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high schools. We did that last year, this legislature adopted a technology grant program. That commission recommended the establishment of some readiness programs.

This legislature last year established readiness programs and this year looks to modify the readiness programs. Last year that commission reported that we tighten up the evaluation process, that we allow school, we require school administrators to play a more active role in evaluations, and that we tighten the tenure process.

This legislature implemented those provisions last year. We also called for the establishment of achievement and improvement grants. And this legislature adopted that provision last year. The most striking recommendation of this commission on educational excellence that was not adopted last year and which we bring before you right now is the adoption of a plan for allowing charter schools to be established in the state.

I also would submit that a provision of that report, that called for the establishment of school councils is in effect what we have described in this legislation as local charter schools. So this is not a new issue for our deliberations, it's an issue that's

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been discussed by educators, businessmen, legislators in the context of a comprehensive report submitted to us three years ago.

It's something the state Senate debated each of the last two years and passed. And it's finally something, I think in this revised version, that this House can firmly get behind and know that we are taking a positive step forward to encourage more innovation in our public school systems.

Specifically if you look at other states who have adopted charter schools as guidance for what types of issues, what types of school populations, and what types of programs we can see charter schools might bring to the state of Connecticut, you see signs that across this country, charter schools have been targeted at, at risk populations.

More than half of the schools that have been authorized in over 15 or 16 states around this country target at risk youth. Youth that are not performing well right now in traditional public education. They also typically have smaller class rooms and smaller enrollments, generally.

They typically have specialized curriculum. And perhaps one of the most significant features of charter schools around this country is the degree in which they

involve parents in the educational process. More than half the schools currently authorized throughout the country have parental involvement in their governing structure and some in their actual instruction structure.

This bill permits that type of innovation to happen here. It answers some of the criticisms that our current system does not always reach out and encourage high levels of parental involvement. We are not always able to encourage small class sizes, innovative techniques, and individualized instruction.

What this proposal would do, through permitting local and state charters is allow those types of innovative approaches to become more common place in our public education system.

We essentially established two types of charters and let me give a very brief description of what those are, because I think that's critical to understanding what charter schools will be about if we adopt this bill.

Local charter schools. The bill allows in the next biennial budget, and I should say, this bill in all of its fiscal impact begins in the next biennial budget, not in the next fiscal year. It permits up to 12 local charter schools to be established throughout

the state during the next biennial budget. In answer to a lot of concerns expressed throughout this House, this bill puts the responsibility and the decision making authority for authorizing local charter schools firmly in the hands of local boards of education.

It states that applicants may come to the local board of education, ask for--that applicant might be parents, teachers and a number of individuals in a community--ask for the ability to provide a little more hands on management of an existing public school in their town.

And under an agreement with that local board of education which would spell out the terms of that charter, the amount of funding that the board would provide, under that agreement a local charter can be accomplished with and only with the approval of the local board of education.

We also permit, under this bill, the establishment of up to 12 state charter schools during the next biennial budget. State chartered schools are a little different. A state charter school would be one where the state board of education rather than the local board of education, provides the approval mechanism for establishing a school. It also would establish that a state grant, similar to our vo-tech school grant, would

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be used to fund state charter schools. Thereby answering a concern of many of us that we not establish charter schools in a community and require the local board of education without input or without approval to pay for the cost of that school.

Under this bill, and I should say within available appropriations on the next budget agreement, but within this bill we would establish a grant program to fund state charter schools. We have as I mentioned up to 12 schools could be approved throughout the state, state charter schools.

No more than 1000 children over the next two years could be enrolled in those twelve schools, so you may see a fewer than 12, depending on the enrollment of each school approved. That is an answer primarily to fiscal concerns.

Because many of us are concerned about establishing a new grant program with too great of a demand for this legislature to meet. We also require a distribution of those charter schools, across the state, both state and local charter schools.

We require that no more than two of either type be approved in any congressional district, thereby minimizing concerns there might be an over concentration of charter schools in any one community

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and thereby cause any disruption of the regular public school system in that community.

We require of both local and state charter schools that they provide assessments of students. We require that they take mastery examinations. And we also require in the application process that they very clearly detail for us what additional means, they might use aside from mastery examinations, to assess student performance.

As I mentioned earlier we require an annual report by a charter school to the state board of education and the local board of education which spells out very clearly the educational progress of the students, the condition of the school, the financial condition of the school, including a certified audit statement and their progress in accomplishing the mission, purpose and specialized focus of the school,

Essentially we require them to have an annual report card to the local and state board of education to which they will be held accountable. In the area of certification--a subject of many hours of discussion--we've come up with a compromise that I think really matches and meets the desires of all parties to the establishment of a charter school, and that is we require that at least 50% of teachers, and actually

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school personnel generally be certified upon the opening of a charter school's doors.

We also permit though, in order to foster some innovations, we permit the other 50% to enter the charter school through the means of the alternate certification process. For those of you who are not familiar with the process, essentially that's a process whereby you may teach in a school while you are achieving certification.

There are requirements already in statute about that, how that process works, it's fairly rigorous, but I think and I think that members of the Education C Committee and the leadership on both sides of the aisle who have worked on this, feel that, that permits charter schools to have innovative mechanisms for bringing in non-traditional teachers.

For example, in some parts of the country universities have taken a lead role in establishing charter schools. University professors are not typically certified. This would permit university professors to enter, teach in a charter school, and attain certification through the alternate route within two years.

As it would for doctors, lawyers, former legislators, who feel they have something to offer a

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charter school. Finally to the funding piece which I think is critical to understanding this bill. And I know it is a difficult one for many of us concerned about the budget implications of adopting yet a new educational program. I think we have achieved though an important balance in the funding area by respecting local control and local decision making on local charter schools, there is no fiscal impact for the conversion of a local charter school, there is no additional state funding, there is no additional local funding, it's something a local board will decide on its own how much it can allocate to an existing school that converts to be a charter school.

The state funding piece, however, is a new grant we've established. And as I mentioned earlier, subject to of course the appropriations process and how much is allocated through that grant we have set a tuition to be paid roughly paralleling our foundation level, approximately \$6,000 per student would be paid by the state to a charter school, a state charter school, to pay for the education of a student at that school.

That number was arrived at through a number of means. Looking at what we currently pay in our vo-tech system, looking at our net current expenditures in the public system, and looking around the country what

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other states were providing the local charters, or the state charter schools and what was necessary to operate a school.

What information from other states has demonstrated is, charter schools typically can operate at a lower cost than an average public school. The reason for that perhaps is lower overhead, they tend not to have a whole school system to manage, they just operate one school. They attend to attract to the school people more interested in innovation and they're able to attain some hours and working day conditions and curriculum conditions that make it such an attractive option that they can do it within the budgets that they have.

And in many states they attract outside sources of support. That's explicitly encouraged and allowed for in this bill. The private donations, private support of any type, is certainly, and other public support for that matter, is certainly permissible for a state charter school.

But we guarantee them a basic tuition rate of \$6000 per student. That tuition is not to be charged to the student, that's what the state pays. Now just an answer to a little more detail question about that, like the vo-tech system if a child leaves your school

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system and attends a vo-tech school in your community your community loses the ECS count for that child and in theory anyway loses the funds that go with that child.

The funds then go to the vo-tech school. Similarly, in this provision here, the ECS count would drop as it would for a child leaving a system for any purpose and the funds would be shifted to a vo-tech or rather in this case to a charter school.

The fiscal note calls for, potentially depending on whether we authorize a thousand students, potentially a cost of up to \$6 million. That would be 1000 students at \$6000 per student. The fiscal note also mentions that, that would be offset by whatever savings is made by the ECS formula, and that's difficult to determine right now due to the caps that we have on our ECS grants.

I think the simplest explanation of the funding provision is to say that, next year during the appropriations process we will all have to evaluate again how much we want to invest in charter schools in the next biennial budget.

And we'll make that comparison when we know how much we're getting to invest in ECS funding, and magnet school funding, and other sources of educational

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grants. That's a decision we defer, in essence, to the budget process and I frankly think that's the best way to handle it.

We set up what we think is a reasonable amount needed per child, and then we the legislature next year when we authorize spending will make the decision how much is actually available. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I think I have perhaps not exhaustively but tried to cover the major provisions of this amendment which would become the bill.

And I would like, through you Mr. Speaker, to yield to my colleague the ranking member of the Education Committee Representative Cafero who worked with me tireless days and nights trying to develop a compromise we could bring to our Chamber, and I'd like to yield to him to make further comment on this amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. And typical of the spirit of the two years and all the bills that we put together today, it's a great way to work, and Representative Cafero we appreciate your efforts, you have the floor sir.

REP. CAFERO: (149nd)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I'd like to start off first of all by saying obviously I strongly

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support the legislation that's in front of us. And also thank the House Chairman of the Education Committee, Cameron Staples for all his hard work and certainly the work of Senator Freedman and Senator Sullivan for making this a reality today, hopefully that will pass in a few moments.

You know when we talk about charter schools, the concept and the phrase if you will is nothing new. It's been around for several years, it's pretty much bi-partisan, you've heard former President Bush talk about it, you've heard President Clinton talk about it and in our own state you've heard Governor Rowland talk about it, our Speaker, Speaker Ritter talk about, the Minority and Majority leaders speak about it.

And I bet you most of us when we're asked during our campaigns about our ideas about education most of us might have brought up charter schools as one of the things that we thought might be helpful. The problem was in putting together this legislation what the various ideas were, of what charter schools should be.

We had arguments whether they should be under the control and approval process totally of the local boards of education, versus a state approval process. That was one area of contention. Another area of contention was that the staff of any charter school,

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should they be fully certified, partially certified, etcetera? I think like most things, most pieces of legislation, certainly within this legislative session, what you see before you is a compromise.

But I know there's been a lot of talk since the final draft of this bill has come out. That the original ideas behind the charter school that we came up with some years ago have been watered down and this really doesn't do anything.

I would like to say that, that is totally untrue. Because one of the standards that everybody who worked on this bill had, was that we would not bring it forth on the floor unless it was a viable, workable, real charter school bill.

And I think that statistics will show nationally that the most successful states that have had on-going charter schools are ones where in yes you have some local innovation that can take place as we provide for in our local charter schools. But with regard to our state charter schools, the authority that say yes or no to that charter, is not local but it is state.

And that is the situation in this particular bill. With regard to certification, as Representative Staples has indicated, we believe that one of the key elements of the charter school's success is flexibility. And

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though we respect the fact that anybody who's going to be teaching young children should be qualified and certified, we realize in attaining that certification, there's various ways in which to do that.

And we provide by allowing 50% of the teaching staff of a charter school to be non-certified at the outset, we provide them with that flexibility. Recognizing that if they're going to buy into the process they should eventually be certified. We require them to do that after about two or three years to the alternative certification route.

So I think what you see here is a compromise. If people say that charter schools are the ruination of public education as we know it, I think you are absolutely wrong. Those who claim that public education has failed and we need these alternatives, I would also submit to you are absolutely wrong.

Thank God we have a very strong viable public education system in Connecticut, but that does not mean that we can't use some alternative, creative ways of providing educational opportunities. Public school opportunities, and that's what charter school legislation is all about.

There are those who will tell you on the other side that charter schools are the be all and end all

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for our educational woes. They are our silver bullet that's going to handle everything. I will submit to you that they are wrong as well.

We have a lot of problems we deal with every day at the state levels and the local levels, charter schools is yet another way to try to provide quality public education.

It is nothing to be afraid of. I don't think it is going to destroy public education as we know it, it won't even come close. I think what it's going to do is make it better, and I think it's about time, after many years of talk, research, study, debate, that we here in the state of Connecticut adopt that legislation, embrace that legislation and that philosophy.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm strongly supportive of the bill. And at this time Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield my colleague Representative Knierim who has been instrumental in getting the charter legislation this far. He has worked on it on the Committee of Educational Excellence, he's worked on it as the ranking member of the Education Committee, he's worked on it as Republican assistant leader.

He has been a great help not only to myself, but to the who leadership of the Education Committee, and I

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think on large part because of his efforts this bill is before us and I would like to yield to him at this time.

SPEAKER RITTER:

And that's a very fitting tribute to our friend who is leaving us. Representative Knierim do you accept the yield sir?

REP. KNIERIM: (16th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker I do. I rise to add my support to the amendment before us here on charter schools today. I'd like to express my thanks to the chair and ranking member of the Education Committee, Representative Staples and Cafero for all their efforts on this legislation.

It is no exaggeration to say that without their efforts the bill would not be before us today, we wouldn't have, what I regard, as a very reasonable and thorough and very well thought out amendment to consider today.

As Representative Staples said at the outset, this is not a brand new idea. It is one that has been considered by this general assembly and by various constituencies within the education community for a number of years here in Connecticut.

And among the other groups that have been

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discussing it, I would add also that the underlying bill that is before us today is proposal that Governor Rowland brought to us, and one that his Commission on School of Choice, also indicated its support for as well as the state board of education.

And Representative Beamon and myself served on that commission. So the support for the concept of charter schools I think is broad. And it is most certainly bi-partisan.

With passage of this amendment, and hopefully the underlying bill, Connecticut could join the ranks of numerous other states, I think at my last count 18 other states had adopted some form of charter school legislation.

And this has already been said, I do think that charter schools are one of the bright spots on the horizon of education reform. By no means a panacea but they are a bright spot for two principle reasons in my estimation.

First, charter schools do offer a great opportunity for innovation and flexibility. By allowing a wide variety of organizations to apply for a charter. By allowing them to specialize in various ways whether it's for purposes of curriculum or pedagogy or classroom size or various other ways.

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And by allowing those charter schools to operate free of some of the mandates that might otherwise apply we provide an opportunity for educators and others to operate schools that try new approaches, or try different approaches that might work for various student populations whose needs might not be served that well in other school systems.

The second way that I think that charter schools are bright spot in the education reform front is that charter schools enhance the opportunities that families have to choose the school that best meets the needs of their children. Connecticut already has a variety of school choice mechanisms. And charter schools could add to that.

They are by definition schools of choice because it is families, parents and their children who decide whether or not to attend a school. They are not required to attend that school, but if the program is one that looks like it offers a good opportunity, it's an option that the parents have. So I think it's an important step because it enhances the opportunities and enhances the alternatives that may be available to Connecticut families in their coming years.

I support the amendment also because I think it's a very balanced approach to the issue. Over the years,

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and throughout this legislative session, a number of different approaches to charter schools have been considered. I think the amendment before us today is a very reasonable and balanced approach.

It's a go slow approach, in the sense that for the first two years we have limits on the number of charter schools that can be opened, and on the number of students that can be enrolled in charter schools. But bear in mind that those caps will not apply after the passage of two years.

So we're taking it as a pilot approach, we will have the opportunity to scrutinize the operation of charter schools here in Connecticut. It's balanced also in the sense that local school boards are guaranteed input into the process, not a veto over the process, but a strong element of input in the sense that local school boards themselves can establish charter schools.

And in the case of state charter schools they're guaranteed the opportunity to give their input to the state board of education as it scrutinizes the charter application. And this has already been discussed as well, the approaches of balance one with respect to certification requirements for teachers. Allowing some opportunity for teachers who might not be certified

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pursuant to the ordinary certification mechanism to serve on the teaching staff of charter schools.

Before I close, I'd just like to comment briefly on what charter schools are doing in other states and why I think that charters schools therefore present such a opportunity here in Connecticut.

Charter schools really, they are vibrant places. They are places where the faculty is extremely enthused about the flexibility and the autonomy that is afforded them as they go about teaching. There are also places where parent's have a great deal of opportunity to be involved and tend to take advantage of those opportunities.

A number of the members of the Education Committee and other members of the General Assembly have had the opportunity to visit a charter school operating near by, the Boston Renaissance School in Massachusetts. And there are just a number of exciting elements about the Boston Renaissance School that I think deserve mention here today as we consider this legislation.

And that is a school, although it uses the lottery admissions process, as would be required under our statute, it has a student body that is more representative of the population of the city of Boston than any of the other public schools in that system.

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And I think that's a tribute to the efforts of that sort of school and others like it, to make sure that all students are informed about the opportunity to enroll in a school like this.

We can have a much more balanced student body. Remarkable there were 2800 student applications for the first year of operation for only 600 spaces in that school. And equally impressive is the number of teachers who sought employment with this new charter school, I think there were 800 teachers applying for 60 teaching positions.

And I think that speaks volumes to what it is the teachers want to do, how they want some more flexibility and some opportunity to innovate, and also to how effective a charter school that's well put together can be to the students to whom it is available.

Also impressive about the Boston Renaissance School is the extent of the community involvement in the school. The board of trustees of that charter school is one populated by people who are active in their community. People involved in public service, judges and educators and teachers and school administrators.

And it's a great collaboration I think of people

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from different walks of life who are coming together to support the endeavor of that private school. The beauty of charter schools is that there are so many different types of charter schools that can be established. And so the Boston Renaissance School is one great example.

But other places in the country have schools that focus on students with remedial needs, or from disadvantaged backgrounds, some of those schools are back to basic schools. Some of those schools are very small, 100 students in a charter school, others are larger.

And again that's the beauty of charter schools is that element of flexibility by which different types of schools can be established. So I'll just close by saying the I am repeating that I think the amendment before us is a very balanced and reasonable approach to charter schools.

And I think it's a strong step forward for Connecticut in offering more educational alternatives and opportunities for choice among Connecticut families, and also to Connecticut educators, more opportunities to pursue innovative and flexible approaches to education. So I strongly urge the adoption of this measure. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

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SPEAKER RITTER:

Are there any other brief remarks? Representative Thompson.

REP. THOMPSON: (13th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker a link to the past. I would like to associate myself to the remarks made by Representative Cafero. When Senator Sullivan and Comptroller Nancy Wyman some years ago asked me to serve on the charter school task force, I thought it was to enlighten me and since I had never served on a board of education, well it certainly was an enlightening experience.

It brought me in contact with several superintendents of schools who served on that committee, representatives of the Connecticut Education Association, the AFD and the Parent PTA's and so on. When we concluded our business, like Representative Cafero, I thought this was an interesting approach.

It was not going to be a panacea but it was well worth the investment of our state and our communities in looking at this proposal. So I wish to thank those people who stuck, stayed with the course, my attention span was not that committed to the concept, but I think it's a wonderful opportunity to provide some innovation in public education and will be of a benefit to our

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children I'm sure. I would like to simply support the bill. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you, I think we're in good shape. Anybody else care to speak? Representative Truglia.

REP. TRUGLIA: (145th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise because I have some reservations about this amendment. I was made aware during discussion of this bill that 30% to 40% of students entering charter schools nationwide were from non-public schools. I checked on two states, Massachusetts and Arizona and was told that 14% to 19% respectively were from private or church affiliated schools.

However, I feel very uncomfortable that this new choice could in any way jeopardize or harm a system that has worked well for thousands of Connecticut school children at very little cost to our taxpayers. At this point I feel that this choice could be detrimental to the non-public schools, especially the parochial schools. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you madam, anybody else? Representative Diamantis.

REP. DIAMANTIS: (79th)

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My concerns, and while I support the efforts, and I know that Senator Sullivan and Senator Freedman and Representatives Cafero, Knierim and Staples have worked very hard on working this particular issue out. There are I think lessons we need to learn from in the past with this issue.

I believe it is innovative, I believe it is something that will offer opportunity for some new creativity and flexibility, but like so many other projects that we have begun, history suggests in this body, that they are never completed.

Long ago we started with the educational enhancement act, we promised some funding on that, we let go of that project and the expense was borne by the local boards.

We then decided that we were going to do alternative schools, and fund those. And work with the boards of education to provide adequate funding for kids that are at risk in those programs. Needless to say if you go to any particular district that has one, and you speak to the teachers that are in those programs and working with those students, they are inadequately funded for one reason or another.

Be it the local taxpayers who feel that education is getting enough, or be it that we in this body and

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the body upstairs, have reduced funding in the last three years to education some \$72 million, and have reduced those costs. We have also begun other programs. We are looking at special ed costs, and I'm not quite sure of how this bill will deal with those costs, but we know without the federal government offsetting some of those costs, those numbers go up.

This bill suggests that we will be doing this project within available appropriations. I suggest to you that we cut this year's ECS formula overall by \$2.7 million and there was a reduction in that. And we also in the last two years found that if we were going to adopt a vo-ag type of structure that we need in the last two years, last year we increased that budget by \$200,000 plus because it wasn't enough and this year an additional \$400,000 with \$100,000 surplus because that wasn't enough.

I suggest to you that if we adopt this, that we become committed to it. That we should realize that it will cost us \$6 million to \$7 million next year and there are usually two or three deep pockets that we go to when it comes time to funding this program if we truly want it to be successful.

Ordinarily the deep pocket is education. So we will be robbing Peter to pay Paul. Or in fact we will

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go to social services, or we will look at corrections or judiciary if we're going to find some money to fund this program.

It becomes necessary that we do that if we are going to speak kindly about this program and it is successful that we be prepared next year to commit the dollars to the program. Otherwise like so many other programs that failed, this too shall fail for lack of funding.

And we will also cause other programs to go along with it. That is my only concern. I will support it because I support the idea, the concept, the flexibility and the hard work that went into it by many people. I will also be one of those that will support next year, as do I know member of the other side of the aisle keeping spending down, making sure that we protect our taxpayers and making sure that education is appropriately funded.

So that means that I will advocate for cuts in other areas of the budget, to fund not just charter schools but the ECS formula and the idea of funding education appropriately at a level that is necessary for local districts. And we will look for those cuts. And clearly appropriations is a policy making body by virtue of the fact that it must fund programs that

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other committees decide is a good idea. That is a policy statement. We will be looking for cuts if we are going to stay within the bottom line, whatever that bottom line is next year.

I suggest we be prepared for that, we be prepared for the transportation costs and all others that are associated with it. And I wish the program and this particular bill's success for next year. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir, anybody else? Representative Giannaros.

REP. GIANNAROS: (21st)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise in favor of the bill in front of us. I want to thank those who have worked for many years, Senator Sullivan and others who have proposed this particular concept many years ago and those who have worked hard over the last few months to bring it to us.

As an educator I think this is a great concept and long overdue in my opinion. It provides alternative education within the public school system, it provides the flexibility we need by eliminating or reducing the regulation. It allows for innovation possibilities, challenges the other schools within the public system

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to review what it is that they do and perhaps do something better than has been done in the past.

Some degree of competition that has never really hurt over the long term, and I really believe that this is a concept that is very similar to the not-for-profit colleges and universities and I think have done us very well.

I urge everyone to vote in favor of this bill, and thank you.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. Representative Boughton.

REP. BOUGHTON: (109th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise not knowing whether I support the bill or don't support it, but I do want to hear more debate on it. I heard some key words from the proponents of the amendment.

One was try, another two were might work, another one was reasonable approach. I think that we shouldn't be trying something if we're not sure it's going to work, I don't want to vote for something that might work, and it may be a reasonable approach.

But I remember when my children were small we had two experiments, one was new math the second was open class rooms. Neither one of those are around today, and there was a whole generation of children that went

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through the agony of those two experiments. I do have a few questions for the proponent this bill. The first would be, on line 267 of the amendment, the local board of education, the school district in which the charter school is located shall provide transportation services for students in the charter school who reside in such school districts, pursuant to, etcetera.

As I remember, this year transportation money became a grant, and my city had a problem with that amount as other cities did. So I was wondering, will those children be counted into that school district and that grant be sized accordingly or can we expect the municipality to provide that funding.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this matches current law. So the impact would be the same as under current law where right now the school district is responsible for providing transportation to children to both public and private schools in their district as I think we all understand.

For purposes of the grant for transportation. Local charter school children are still considered by ECS purposes students within that district. State

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charter school students like a more traditional non-profit independent school, are not considered students in that district for purposes of ECS grants.

That's consistent with current practice. If you have private schools in your town, they're not considered for purposes of the grant and you are required by statute to pay the cost, or to provide transportation. So this essentially puts the charter schools on the same footing as are currently provided for public and private schools.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Boughton.

REP. BOUGHTON: (109th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Through you Mr. Speaker. Then wouldn't we be establishing a new unfunded mandate? Or making one larger than the previous mandate upon those municipalities? Through you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

I would not characterize it that way Representative Boughton. The local, if it's a local converted charter school, you're already providing that transportation to that public school right now and you

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are receiving what ever compensation the state provides under transportation grants for that purposes. If it is a state chartered school it is like a private school opening in your town that you have the responsibility to provide the transportation for.

So I don't believe that this is a new unfunded mandate. We match current and your current obligations with respect to both public and private school transportation.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Boughton.

REP. BOUGHTON: (109th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Through you Mr. Speaker. The transportation we provide now unfunded is in existence, right? We're going to increase the number of children that we won't be funded for. And that's, and that's law, you're right the current law is we're not funded for that. But we're mandated to provide that transportation.

If you increase those going to the charter schools from our schools and we're not going get funded for those, and our grant. Then it's an unfunded mandates or more people being added in to that unfunded mandate. Through you Mr. Speaker.

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Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

No I don't agree with that characterization Representative Boughton. For the most part these are local district students, currently enrolled in some school in your town. They are either in your public schools now or they are in a private or parochial school now. These are children you are already transporting.

You're either transporting them to an existing public or private school now, and you will have the obligation after this law passes, if a charter school is established in your community to provide transportation there as well. So I don't see it as an additional burden. I think the only potential change that the town would have to undergo, is they might have to alter their route if there is a new location for a state charter school in their town.

But I think to characterize it as a new unfunded mandate with new students coming in is an overstatement. You're likely to have the same students currently enrolled in your community already.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Boughton.

REP. BOUGHTON: (109th)

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Thank you Mr. Speaker. Through you Mr. Speaker. A simple question. Are the children that are now in charter, private parochial schools in private schools where we provide the transportation for are they counted in towards that monies we receive in this new grant method for transportation? Through you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Through you Mr. Speaker. No they're not.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Will you remark further? You have the floor sir.

REP. BOUGHTON: (109th)

Just one other question then, through you Mr. Speaker. On lines 258 and 259 when you talk about 105% of the foundation level pursuant to. Why would it be 105% rather than 100%? Through you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Through you, we really achieve first through looking at the charter schools across the country. We tried to determine what the necessary level of funding would be for charter schools

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in Connecticut. And in many states the figure in the vicinity of \$6000 seemed like a cost that was reasonable for those schools to operate.

We then decided that we needed to attach, rather than put a numerical dollar amount in the statutes, we should tie it to an existing level of funding, in this case the foundation. Our foundation grants to communities is \$5711, so 105% brought that to approximately \$6000.

That way if in the future the foundation is raised, and the cost raised, generally where we're providing public education this would raise as well and we would not need to amend the charter school statute. Through you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Boughton.

REP. BOUGHTON: (109th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. One more question and so in other words, through you Mr. Speaker, in other words we're going to pay more for the children going to this charter school than we pay to the municipality. We'll give them 105% at the charter school but we'll only give the municipality 100% is that correct? Through you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

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Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

No, that only would count what the foundation includes as regular and special education not any transportation grants or other grants providing a community, so it would not necessarily be more than the total aid a community is receiving per student on average.

REP. BOUGHTON: (109th)

Thank you, thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. Anybody else? Representative Tymniak.

REP. TYMNIAK: (133rd)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to make some brief remarks. I too have some concerns with regard to this bill. It is not going to be a silver bullet. But we all know that our education systems in some of districts are in need of repair. I think this takes a responsible first step.

One that will allow some more choice to the various parents in those communities. One of the things which is not nebulized is during the first two year period which will be more of a pilot type project the number of students is limited in the state charter

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schools to 1000. Obviously the impact on either the state or the local communities will be somewhat minimal because of that, by the same token will afford us the opportunity to review the educational performances and to make a determinations as to where we may go with this in the future.

As a result I would urge the House to support this responsible first step towards charter school. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. Anybody else? Representative Tercyak.

REP. TERCYAK: (46th)

It's really very short questions and very short answers I assure. Through you Mr. Speaker to the proponent of the amendment.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Please proceed.

REP. TERCYAK: (46th)

Through you Mr. Speaker. The \$6000 tuition reimbursement, is this a reimbursement to the school district or does it go to the school itself?

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

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Thank you Mr. Speaker. The \$6000 grant is to the school itself.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Tercyak.

REP. TERCYAK: (46th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Through you Mr. Speaker. Does the local board of education have the prerogative in making the decision as to whether it will have a charter school in its district.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Thank you, through you Mr. Speaker. For the local charter schools, Representative Tercyak, the local board has the complete discretion to approve them or to not approve them. And they also have discretion about how much funding they would provide out of the public budget to support a local charter school.

For a state charter school, because the state board of ed is authorizing the school, the local board of ed has opportunities for input including public hearings and notification. But the decision on granting a charter and committing the funds, since they're state funds resides with the state board of education.

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SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Tercyak.

REP. TERCYAK: (46th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Through you Mr. Speaker.  
The last question. Is there a CREC involvement in this  
bill?

SPEAKER RITTER:

Representative Staples.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

I'm sorry could you repeat the question please?

REP. TERCYAK: (46th)

Is there a CREC involvement in this bill? CREC,  
C-R-E-C?

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

Through you Mr. Speaker. If you're referring to  
the Regional Educational Service Center in the Hartford  
area?

REP. TERCYAK: (46th)

I am.

REP. STAPLES: (96th)

There is the opportunity in this legislation for a  
RESC to apply to establish, just like a local board of  
ed may, a state or local charter. So they have the  
same opportunity as anybody else to come forward with a  
proposal to a local board of education or a state board

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of education. Through you Mr. Speaker.

REP. TERCYAK: (46th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Thank you sir.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you sir. Anybody else? Representative Garcia.

REP. GARCIA: (128th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this legislation. I think it will strengthen public education. We took into consideration many of the concerns that people have regarding this new venture. What's good about this legislation is that it allows teachers and parents at the local level to propose the establishment of these schools.

It also encourages the use of different and innovative teaching methods. And finally it provides parents as well as students with another option within the public school system. The Connecticut Education Association has joined us in supporting this bill.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would like the Chamber to also know that as the vice chair of education since no one else recognized me, I also participated in this process and I contributed as much as I was allowed to. I would have been, had I been given an opportunity I would have contributed even more. Unfortunately that

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is not the case in any of the committees that I serve. We talk a lot about here about inclusion. But that inclusion is usually limited to a vote and Mr. Speaker, I hate to do this, but I am sick and tired of being an invisible person in this Chamber.

I feel that I have something to contribute to this Chamber, and I just can't manage, no matter how hard I try to break the barriers that have been put up. And again I really hate to rain on this parade, but enough is enough. I have been totally ignored, I've been standing here, eight people rose to spoke on this bill before I did.

And yesterday I was trying to get the attention of the Chamber to be recognized to speak, I was not allowed to do that. Today, the chair, the vice chair, they got up, they didn't recognize that I was the vice-chair of that committee. And all the legislation that goes through all the committees I am totally ignored and I want the Chamber to know that, because I resent that.

I think I deserve more respect around here and that's all that I'm calling for. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you madam? Will you remark further?

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Representative Hoffman.

REP. HOFFMAN: (20th)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise with mixed feelings regarding this amendment, this bill. While I appreciate the work of my colleagues and recognize that this is a fair and reasonable compromise, I guess what bothers me most is that it is a compromise.

And as a piece of educational reform, a piece of that whole reform package that we talk about, and we give lip service too, this bill probably is already ancient history relative to where the rest of the country and the rest of the world is.

As I understand it this piece of legislation has taken the better part of 10 years to craft. We're probably, relatively speaking, about 20 years behind the rest of the world, in terms of how we educate our kids. I'd like to just pose a rhetorical question that is when we're really going to talk about educational reform and stop worrying about restricting it to please so many different special interests.

And while this may be a better situation, putting together this charter school bill, it simply may be a way to increase the already inflated bureaucracy that exists in our school system. So Mr. Speaker I can only offer very unenthusiastic support. Thank you.

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SPEAKER RITTER:

A nice way to try your minds, all in favor signify by saying aye, sorry, sorry, sorry, Representative Clemons is on her feet. I'm sorry, I'm trying to move things along and you were absolutely on your feet, and I saw you, you have the floor madam.

REP. CLEMONS: (56)

Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'll be very brief. When this debate started I still had not decided which way I would vote. And Representative Diamantis expressed the same doubts that I have and I can't express them any better, but I would just like to publicly say that I agree with those, and they lead me to a different conclusion. I will vote no and I hope others might also vote not to show that on this day we did know that we did not have a perfect plan and we did not just run merrily off on another fad that the future would not support.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Thank you madam, we're ready to try our mind. All in favor signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Opposed no. The ayes have it Senate "A" is

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adopted. Will you remark further on this bill as amended? If not, staff and guests to the well of the House, the machine is open.

CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call, members to the Chamber. The House is voting by roll call, members to the Chamber please.

SPEAKER RITTER:

Have all the members voted? Please check the roll call machine to make sure your vote is properly cast. If it has the machine will be locked. Clerk please take a tally. Clerk please announce the tally.

CLERK:

Senate Bill Number 59 as amended by Senate "A" in concurrence with the Senate.

Total Number Voting	146
Necessary for Passage	74
Those voting Yea	130
Those voting Nay	16
Those absent and not voting	4

SPEAKER RITTER:

Bill as amended passes. Clerk please call Calendar 590. Representative Lyons, I'm sorry Representative Lyons first.

REP. LYONS: (146th)

JOINT  
STANDING  
COMMITTEE  
HEARINGS

EDUCATION  
PART 3  
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EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 11, 1996  
1:00 p.m.

PRESIDING CHAIRMEN: Senator Freedman  
Representative Staples

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SENATORS: Sullivan, Cook, Kissel,  
Williams

REPRESENTATIVES: Cafero, Garcia, Barth,  
Beals, Cardin, Currey,  
DeMarinis, Diamantis,  
Flaherty, Fritz, Green,  
Giannaros, Hoffman,  
Knierim, Merrill, Powers,  
Ryan, Sawyer, Scalzo,  
Tymniak, Veltri, Widlitz

SENATOR FREEDMAN: I call this public hearing to order.  
If you would kindly sit down and try and keep the  
conversations to a minimum we'll be able to move  
forward.

As you're aware, the first part of the public  
hearing the first hour is devoted to legislators,  
agency heads. We have some people signed up for  
that so we are going to proceed. And the first  
person on the list is the undersecretary -- the  
secretary of OPM, Reg Jones. Good afternoon, Reg.

REGINALD JONES: Good afternoon, Senator Freedman and  
Representative Staples and members of the Education  
Committee.

I am Reg Jones, Secretary of the Office of Policy  
and Management. I'm pleased to testify before you  
in support of Senate Bills 58 and 59 and to offer  
some remarks on HB5698, AN ACT CONCERNING THE  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON  
SCHOOL CHOICE.

I'd like to start with SB58, AN ACT CONCERNING  
INTRADISTRICT CHOICE.

This legislation will allow, but not require, local  
and regional boards of education to develop  
intradistrict student assignment programs and

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provide transportation services to students participating in the program.

Intradistrict choice legislation will increase flexibility in school districts and provide school districts and parents with greater options in choosing schools. We believe that an element of competition will be fostered by choice all to the benefit of creative teaching and motivated students.

The next bill I'd like to address is SB59, AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.

As you are aware, the Governor's Commission on School Choice, recommended the establishment of charter schools.

This legislation will allow the State Board of Education to begin to approve up to 24 charter schools in the state. Charter schools will provide school districts and parents with greater options in choosing schools and curricula.

Such schools will hopefully develop innovative approaches to education. Teachers will have the opportunity to help establish and work in schools with alternative methods of instruction, school structure and management. Competition will motivate schools to improve quality.

Municipalities will be required to provide 100% of their average student costs to the charter schools for participating students. Charter schools will be permitted to raise additional funds from private sources, but may not charge tuition.

Public-private cooperation will be fostered.

HB5698 includes the recommendations of Governor Rowland's Commission on School Choice.

The governor is grateful to the commission for its hard work and fully supports the objectives presented in the commission's report.

As you know, the report presents three areas in

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which school choice can be introduced. One area, charter schools, I have already addressed.

HB5698 includes the other two areas of early childhood education and Project Concern.

The administration supports the expansion of Project Concern. This program has been highly successful over a long period of time. It is particularly important for the same reasons that support charter schools. That Project Concern be expanded to include non-public schools. We at OPM would like to work with the Education and Appropriation Committees to arrive at a mutually acceptable bill and funding level.

The third area involving school choice is early childhood education. I think that we must move forward in this area. Not only is early childhood education so valuable for the child, it becomes doubly important when coupled with this administration's efforts to move people from the welfare rolls to the work force.

HB5698, however, in its present form, provides some difficulties for us. Because of the bill's use of state income tax credits, the cost is not clear. More important, the poorest of our citizens are eligible for Headstart programs, but the second poorest may not be and also more than likely they do not pay any income taxes at all, eliminating the value of the credit to them.

Thus, there is a very real concern that this tax credit would not benefit those in the greatest need of early childhood education.

I would like the opportunity to work with the cognizant committees to see what can be reasonably done in the next biennium.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

REP. STAPLES: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here today. I have a couple of questions for you about your testimony concerning the costs of particularly

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at that time, we'd be very happy to hear from them.

We're going to go -- we have three sheets, pro, con and then all the rest of the bills we're going to take one from each sheet as we go through so that we will hear different points of view this afternoon.

So we are going to start with someone from the con side and the first person will be the former Speaker of the House, Irving Stolberg. He will be followed by somebody on the pro side, who is Peter Tacy.

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

IRVING STOLBERG: Good afternoon, Senator Freedman, members of the committee. I am Irving Stolberg, resident of New Haven and I was privileged to have served in this assembly for a number of years.

I would start by thanking each and every member of the committee for your service to the people of Connecticut. You are not thanked enough and I think it's appropriate to do so.

I would like to testify strongly against 5698 and the concepts pertaining thereto. And also to speak against or at least caution consideration of SB58 and 59.

These are truly the times that try men's and women's souls. They are times of intense frustration in this country. Frustration that leads to cynicism and even anger. And let me suggest that those impulses often are reflected in our political debate. That certainly is the case today.

Those impulses also are not the impulses that lead us to constructive or rational solutions to the problems that our society faces.

I would suggest that your consideration of education legislation should be focussed on what we can do for our families, what we can do to enhance and preserve our communities and most of all, how

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most problematic schools in the state and give him the power, along with yourselves, to focus on those schools and improve them. You can't abandon the worse public schools. You've got to help them.

I would also suggest just in drafting, if you want to look at SB59, the concept in Section 2 seems somewhat illogical. It provides that private schools already in existence could not qualify as charter schools, but the exact school, if it were created tomorrow, could qualify as a private school.

So tested schools that may be doing a very good job could not qualify. But if somebody, an individual or a corporation or a profit agency wanted to create one and apply that didn't already exist, it could become a charter school.

If not a problem in concept, that certainly is a problem in drafting, I think.

REP. CAFERO: I have a follow-up question, Senator. Mr. Speaker, some information I recently received from the Department of Education indicated that in fiscal year I believe '94-95, the State of Connecticut spent \$72 million in public education funds on private institutions by way of out-of-district placements for special education.

There are many -- we had the opportunity as a committee this summer and throughout the off session, if you will, to travel throughout the state where we heard testimony from many superintendents both sides of the political aisle all over the state, complaining that the system that we currently work under is bankrupting the public education system and their particular districts.

Do you have any comment with regard to that? I notice your button says public monies for public schools. Were you aware of the magnitude of this?

IRVING STOLBERG: I was aware of the problem. It has grown each year so I wasn't familiar with the current statistics. I thank you for bringing them

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Secondarily on the part of local boards of education.

Thirdly on the parts of parents and a whole range of other parts of the community that should have the commitment to education.

Fourthly on the part of administrators and fifthly on the part of teachers.

I would say in many schools the accountability is pretty good. In a lot, it is not as good as it should be and I would say an excellent project as opposed to certainly 5698 and in part to SB58 and 59, would be to set up a program to identify the school with the largest number of problems.

And set up a program where the commissioner could have people really work with those schools to improve them. To improve the teaching, to improve the community participation, etc.

SEN. SULLIVAN: Okay, we've tried that. We tried that in Connecticut and what I'm having a really hard time understanding and it's out of my frustration and my deep and abiding worry about the quality of public schools and my fear of the other legislation that we're hearing about today again, which I think does undermine our fundamental commitment to public education.

That we are not putting alternatives on the table for those parents who want that accountability. Charter schools are premised on one thing: performance. No other measure. Either you do or you lose. And that's what's missing in the current system now. That's why I ask you the question about accountability. There are so many accountabilities, there is no accountability.

IRVING STOLBERG: Senator, I've had an opportunity to sit on the Board of Directors of the Regional Lab for Education, an OERI funded mechanism that provides for schools as really learning centered community operations. We've done a lot of work in innovative education.

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The institutions that I represent certainly in many cases are old institutions and they are well known. They've been around a long time. They also are among the most diverse in the state, public or private.

The average independent school this year has a minority enrollment of about 15%. I mentioned the financial aid figures.

Also the group includes not only schools with very, that are oriented towards very high achieving students of one kind or another, but there are schools that are entirely focussed on children with one or another form of learning need or disability.

They simply are schools that one by one that were organized with a particular educational design in mind that suits a particular group of kids.

The approach is fundamentally unlike the public sector in that institutional sense. It is most unlike it in that sense in that you are taking what might be a small break out program in a public system and make a whole school out of it.

And I don't think in my mind that that makes something elitist. It makes it differently worked out. And I think the record speaks for itself that it's an effective strategy, at least for the children who are being served by those schools.

REP. STAPLES: Any other questions? Thank you very much. George Springer is next followed by Jane Glover.

GEORGE SPRINGER: Good afternoon, Representative Staples, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is George Springer. I'm the President of the CSFT, a union of teachers, school personnel, state employees, health care professionals and college faculty.

I'm here -- there are a number of bills before you that our union is very interested in. I am not going to testify on the one on school choice. My

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testimony, I believe, is going to be fairly positive. I'm going to be dealing with the one which is 435, which is the one on mutual trust labor management relations. And 59, on charter schools.

And I want to suggest to you that those are two of the most promising bills in terms of school improvement.

435, which deals with labor management relations has the possibility of encouraging school districts to bring together and state employment and municipal employment, bring together workers and management to work for different, for better products, to work for improved services.

We have some concern that Sections 27 and 28 don't really belong in that bill and we hope that before the process is over people will rally behind HB5477, which is the same as 435 without Sections 27 and 28.

On charter schools let me suggest that the bill as written is very promising. I believe it has the potential for doing great good. On the other hand, what we have in that bill is a skeleton. And the bill could be changed or could be added to make it very good, it could be added to to make it very terrible.

SB59

We could be supporting it or we could be opposing it in time. There is a group that's been working and talking about how to improve the bill, how to get the bill supported by a large number of people and I support the work of that group, and I hope that there will come out of it a bill that we can support.

I want to believe that despite the rhetoric, all of us are sincerely interested in improving learning and teaching. I want to believe that there is a resolve among most of the people involved in education in this state, to accomplish that.

I hope that these two bills can be so modified that they will be deserving of all of our support. I

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area in terms of looking at not only the possible benefits of the bill, which I think are many, but also should we go down this road? Can we be lulling both parties, not just management or a labor party, but can we be lulling both parties into a false sense of goodwill that they will regret later?

GEORGE SPRINGER: I'm hope we're not dealing with developing a false sense of good will. I hope that what 435 and 5477 does is encourages us to rely on the best in management and labor to reach agreements that we can abide by.

Always in a process there are other folks or there are people with other agendas. I can't speak for that. When those other agendas come in play, we, of course, need some way of reaching closure. Arbitration is one of those ways.

But I don't know that. We need to mix the two. I would like to separate them.

REP. STAPLES: More questions? Representative Barth.

REP. BARTH: Mr. Springer, I'm assuming based on your testimony that you're opposed to SB59 as currently drafted; is that correct?

GEORGE SPRINGER: I'm saying that there are things in 59, things that are missing from 59 that needs to be there.

For example, you know you've heard the statement that the devils in the details. In this instance, the angels may be in the details. I don't know. But it's not there.

I heard Senator Sullivan say earlier that in this particular bill it deals with accountability. I think if you read it carefully, at least when I read it carefully, I don't see that there. There is a group that's discussing that now. I hope that they can come up with some fleshing it out that we can agree on.

If we pass this bill, they would have to be

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Given the pressing needs of our public schools and our Constitutional responsibility to provide a free public education for every child, it's critical that scarce state resources be directed to our public schools.

The argument that choice will cause our public schools to improve and compete is unrealistic. How will schools be improved with drawing resources from that school? What choice will there be for the students who remain in that school?

The experience of other states indicates that parents did not make school choices for educational reasons, but for reasons of a convenience, such as day care or work site.

And a Rand study in Minnesota indicated the reasons given for private enrollment included educational quality less than 40% of the time.

Also give that 83% of our private schools are religiously sponsored, vouchers would never lead the public support for religious instruction, violating Constitutional protections.

That being said, CAFE does support greater state commitment to school readiness programs. The value of high quality early childhood programs is indisputable. However, we do not support rating this program as a pilot for school choice.

CAFE also supports a greater state commitment to Project Concern, but opposed the expansion of that program to include independent schools.

With respect to SB59, CAFE strongly supports the concept of charter schools provided that 1) the schools are nonsectarian; 2) the schools have nondiscriminatory enrollment procedure and 3) the proposal has the support of parents and teachers.

Can you hear me?

SEN. FREEDMAN: Excuse me. There seems to be a problem with the sound system. Is there somebody we can call to fix that?

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ROB DAVES: Did you get most of that?

SEN. FREEDMAN: Well, it was coming in on and off.

REP. STAPLES: Is your microphone still on? Is the light on?

ROB DAVES: Yes. Anyway, with respect to SB59, it's extremely important that the locally elected Board of Education remain responsible for granting and revoking charters. It's the Board of Education that could best assess the ability of the charter school to meet that district's needs.

With all due respect to the expertise of the state Board of Education, we believe it is contrary to a growing trend to move toward site based management and a reduction in state bureaucracy to vest that responsibility solely with the department, state Board of Education.

In addition, in this era of serious fiscal constraints in public education, it is inappropriate to create a situation where the state Board of Education could dictate the expenditure of local tax dollars for a charter school that was not supported by locally elected officials.

If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Thank you. Are there questions from members of the committee? Representative Beals.

REP. BEALS: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Some of the people who argue that the state Board of Education should be the chartering entity do so because they feel that no local board of education would charter a school because they would see it as a threat or competition.

Do you have any evidence to the contrary? Or reason to believe that some public school boards might actually do this?

ROB DAVES: In my view, school board members, in general, are very much in touch with the people

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that they represent. I am in daily contact, every time I go to the grocery store, walk down the streets, it's very clear much of the time, what our problems are.

And I think most school board members would welcome a chance to become innovative, to look for solutions that meet their specific needs. But to have somebody from the state dictate those needs, I think is contrary to the process of encouraging innovation.

And also I can say that if you would like to pilot a program, cause this is a new program, I think the place to do it would be at the local level. If it doesn't work, then it can be modified at a later date.

REP. BEALS: And you think there are some school boards who would choose to do that?

ROB DAVES: Yes.

REP. BEALS: Thank you.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Representative Tymniak.

REP. TYMNIAK: As a big supporter of the issue of local control, all right, I share your concern with regard to the charter school bill. How would you feel if the language or the mandates should be structured so that we have I know in a local control with regard to chartering a schools, that would be located in your towns, or your districts?

ROB DAVES: I am not in -- I did look over the bill and as long as we were able to look at all aspects, and under the rules that I mentioned before, that the schools not be segregatarian, that they have nondiscriminatory enrollment procedure and that they involve in some formal fashion parents and teachers, I think as long as they address those issue.

REP. TYMNIAK: Do you feel that this is an issue that could be shared between the local and the state?

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ROB DAVES: The state has areas that they already control, that would supersede anything that would happen at the local level. And I think there is already some level of sharing.

Yes, there's some capacity for oversight. I'm not sure exactly how that would be written into the bill.

REP. TYMNIAK: Are you familiar with the bill that was before us last year concerning charter schools?

ROB DAVES: Brief, yes.

REP. TYMNIAK: I believe my recollection of that bill was that there was an element of appeal rights that a charter school would have if they were turned down by a locality or a school district?

ROB DAVES: Okay.

REP. TYMNIAK: Would that be something that your group would feel would be acceptable?

ROB DAVES: Specifically, I represent the Association of Boards of Ed through our delegate assembly process, and we do not have language that talks to that.

But I think it would be something that we could look at. I'd like to reserve the opportunity to get back to you about that.

REP. TYMNIAK: I'd appreciate that. Thank you.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Any other questions? Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO: Sir, earlier and forgive me I was running out of the room to another meeting. Earlier I had mentioned that according to the state Department of Education statistics show that \$72 million in fiscal year '94-'95 of public monies out of local school districts went to out of district places in the special education system.

Again, I note your badge. Is that troublesome to you as a representative of CAFE?

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ROB DAVES: Certainly.

REP. CAFERO: For the same reasons you're opposed to vouchers?

ROB DAVES: There seems to be increasing requirement and fiscal pressure on school boards to provide for out of district placements for special education. And we're searching into ways to modify that. But I think a lot of the solution lies at the federal level with respect to reauthorization of IDEA and we're working in that area.

But what we're talking about here when we talk about school choice, is reform and improvement for the general population of the school districts. To take money away and give it to private concerns does nothing for our public schools.

There are -- the state should be looking at an inclusive reform agenda and instead of looking at school location, we ought to be thinking really about learning.

And so with all respect, the school choice is just one small part. We should be looking at other ways.

REP. CAFERO: Does the introduction of this legislation presume that we're not looking at other ways to repair or strengthen our public schools?

ROB DAVES: I think it shows that we're strongly looking in an area where it's not going to give the greatest benefits. I'm talking about school choice.

REP. CAFERO: See, I guess what I'm trying to figure out and understand your objection in that I believe CABE'S position with regard to charter schools, my understanding and you correct me if I'm wrong, is that if the model is proposed and the governor's bill or as passed yesterday -- excuse me, last year by the Senate, wherein the monies the state monies follow the child or a percentage of the net student expenditure follows the child to the charter school, which by every definition is a

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public school.

Or in the voucher example last year's or this where public monies are going to private institutions, again, out of the mainstream public education system or in where I just asked you where monies, public school monies are going for special education students out of district, is your objection the taking of money, regardless of where it goes, out of the quote unquote mainstream public education system? Be that charter public schools, be that out of district placement for special ed, or be that vouchers? Is that --

ROB DAVES: That's the main concern.

REP. CAFERO: That's the main concern. It's a funding concern.

ROB DAVES: That it's taking public funds out of the public system.

REP. CAFERO: So is there, and I don't mean to put words in your mouth, does that mean there's not a philosophical concern or just a funding concern?

ROB DAVES: No, there's a definite philosophical concern. This is a severe change in the historical contract that United States citizens have for supplying the education for the commonwealth children. This is the first time, at least in this state, and in maybe it's of giving or taking public funds and taking them for private uses.

I think we really need for the future of our country a strong public educational system.  
Public.

REP. CAFERO: It's actually the first time I guess in this manner, but we just discussed the fact that right now again \$72 million of public funds goes to private institutions. We have obviously public transportation funds used for parochial schools, that kind of thing.

So it's certainly not the first time public monies have been used for private purposes; is that -- I

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mean, we would agree on that?

ROB DAVES: Technically you're correct, but those are services on -- that have been expanded over the last few years that services that cannot be provided for in the local school setting.

In fact, at our, at my school district, we've made every possible, we've gone and looked at every possible way to provide as many services as you an in-house, because it always, if we can serve a student in house, it will save our school district much money and over, I think in the last fiscal year, we saved over \$100,000 by providing some of the capabilities in house.

So we're always looking to do everything we can locally. It's just that we can't do everything that's needed.

REP. CAFERO: Thank you.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Representative Green.

REP. GREEN: Good afternoon. I'm just trying to get a little bit more specific on when you ask that charter schools not discriminate, have nondiscriminatory enrollment practices. What specifically do you mean in terms of criteria or whatever in not discriminating against?

ROB DAVES: Well, you know, the obvious things that are written in the bill, race, gender, religious, but also abilities. I think in the school settings as they currently exist, classes have heterogenous populations and it's important to maintain that balance, at least on the level of the whole school.

REP. GREEN: And the current law that we have in terms of interdistrict cooperation and LEA's being able to cooperate with each other, do you believe that boards of education encourage say individuals to go to a school in another town and possibly get that tuition for that child in that town if the two boards agree?

For example, if a kid from New Britain wants to go

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to Southington, can the boards of education now agree to allow that child to go to that school and say Southington and New Britain pay for that tuition? Could the boards of education do that now?

ROB DAVES: As far as I understand, that is currently possible, that's correct.

REP. GREEN: Do you have any information on whether or not that's a practice or how many people may be taking advantage of that opportunity?

ROB DAVES: I do not know. However, our school board association does promote public school choice in that manner.

REP GREEN: On charter schools in terms of what the law says now, do you believe that schools, LEA's, can now create a school based on what they think their needs are? And you mentioned something about the special education in-house programs. You create a program because you think there's a need for that and it will be tailored to trying to address those concerns for that population.

Is that a concept of a charter school?

ROB DAVES: Are we currently doing that now?

REP. GREEN: Well, some of the in-house special ed programs?

ROB DAVES: We're doing within the current structure. I think the way the law is written is actually setting up a school to have an independent experimental situation that would be free of some levels of state mandates. That's a different concept that doesn't exist now.

REP. GREEN: Okay.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Any other questions? Representative Cafero.

REP. CAFERO: Yeah, I'm sorry. Could I just follow up. Let's just focus on the charter school. You could

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foresee a situation based on what I just heard you say where a school board might decide that they want to try, similar to a magnet school, they want to try take an existing school and make it a charter school, and make that application to the state Board of Education and hopefully do some new and innovative things based on the fact that they might be excused from some of the mandates and restrictions that are currently on the remainder of the school proper, if you will.

Would you -- is that what you would hope to do?

ROB DAVES: This will would allow creation of a new experimental school that would allow freedom from certain state mandates, correct.

REP. CAFERO: And is CAFE in favor of that if it was a local school board creation?

ROB DAVES: That's right, yes. CAFE would be in favor of that if it was locally controlled because of the reasons I stated before. That the problems are local and the solution should be local.

REP. CAFERO: Okay, thank you.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Further questions? Thank you. Rabbi Orkand followed by Sheila Belton followed by Peter Chase or Frank Gagliardi.

Good afternoon, Rabbi. It's been a long day. It's the way things work up here.

RABBI ROBERT ORKAND: Senator Freedman, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Rabbi Robert Orkand and I am proud to serve as the co-chair of the Citizens Alliance for Public Education, CAPE.

I felt compelled to become a part of CAPE's effort because I feel that several fundamental values that I hold dear are in jeopardy of being threatened.

The first of those values is what has come to become called the separation between church and state.

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state support for public transportation to our students. Naturally if this happens, certainly we shouldn't give transportation to private and parochial school students.

So what we're saying is with limited financial resources they should put into the public education of our students and not into the private and parochial schools.

I speak in favor of SB59 concerning public charter schools provided again, access is open to all students, preferably by a lottery system. Should be no creaming off of selected students and no reduction in support for general public schools.

Teachers and administrators should be subject to state certification requirements.

SB400 concerning the school-to-work program should not eliminate the maximum number of hours of work site experience and students work experience should continue to be paid for. I thought we got rid of slavery several years ago.

SB435 concerning mutual trust bargaining should be encouraged, but arbitrators should not be allowed to consider a town's reserve account in determining ability to pay. Reserves are needed to protect against unforeseen expense requirements and to preserve bond rating requirements for reasonable interest rates for long term financing projects, including those of schools.

Don't permit -- pay for operating expenses out of funds designed to keep long term bonding costs reasonable.

HB5698, AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATION OF THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON SCHOOL CHOICE. No public taxpayer's money should be used to support private and religious schools. There's absolutely no indication that after adjusting for socio-economic conditions, private and religious schools do a better job than public schools.

In addition, the entanglement question with

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JOHN KING: I would assume and I will try to provide you with a specific information rather than my assumption, but I think many of the schools, and I'm assuming St. Joseph's are largely minority in the urban areas that are serviced by the catholic schools and many of them are majority, significant minority and significant majority, non-catholic.

REP. GREEN: And what about in the school in Newington?

JOHN KING: I would assume that there is a much more even racial balance.

REP. GREEN: Much more what?

JOHN KING: Even racial balance between black and white and hispanic.

REP. GREEN: Were you involved or were the catholic schools involved in the diversity studies that regional stuff few years ago, where the catholic schools involved with that discussion?

JOHN KING: As I sit here, I don't know whether they were or they weren't. But I'm sorry to say I will provide you the information, but I just don't have that available to me right now.

REP. STAPLES: Any other questions? Thank you, John. Bob Eagan followed by Helena Stalson.

I want to remind every one here that we are going to end the public hearing at 6:00 as previously noted. If you have written testimony, you've submitted we have, and we'll certainly take a look at it. Thank you.

BOB EAGAN: Good evening. My name is Bob Eagan and I'm President of the Connecticut Education Association.

SB59

I'd like to read you the mission statement of our organization. The mission statement says that the Connecticut Education Association, a membership organization promotes the rights and interests of its members and advocates for public education and learners. That's the mission statement of the

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Connecticut Education Association.

The CEA and its members support the passage and implementation of any proposal including a charter school law that promotes the betterment of public education and forces greater educational opportunity within public schools for all children.

However, when one looks at the more than 20 states that currently have charter schools, one realizes that there are good charter school laws and there are bad charter school laws. We want Connecticut to have a good charter school law. And a good charter school law should do certain things and should not do other things.

A good charter school law should not be a means of dismantling public education. And should not be used for making money from children. And should not be a means of subsidizing religious and other private schools with taxpayer dollars.

A good charter school law should promise the use of innovative instructional strategies that improve teaching and learning and should not simply focus on decentralization and deregulation.

A good charter school law should make sure that charter schools will be for not-for-profit and non-sectarian.

A good charter school law should truly create public schools that have open admissions and meet the needs of all students. Charter schools should not exacerbate or reinforce class, race, or educational stratification and the law should not allow charter schools to receive more funds than traditional public schools or drain funds from existing public schools.

A good charter school law must assure that certified teachers and administrators work with students, maintaining professional standards is of paramount importance in Connecticut.

When the Education Enhancement Act was passed, it didn't just raise teachers salaries, it implemented

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the most rigorous teacher training and recertification requirements in this country. And there should be no retreat in a good charter school law from the high standards that have been set for and required of public school teachers.

A good charter school law should require that students and teachers alike be covered by the same anti-discrimination civil rights, safety and health regulations, federal constitutional guarantees, tenure and collective bargaining laws that govern the local school districts.

By their very structure, charter schools are experiments. Therefore, students and teachers should not have to give up any protections in order to participate in these experiments. This would only serve to discourage rather than encourage participation.

CEA's Representative Assembly, which is our highest governing body, has passed a resolution calling for the investigation of charter schools in Connecticut. For the past several weeks, I have participated in several Connecticut charter school workshops with education stakeholders, including members of the General Assembly.

I look forward to continuing this dialogue as we all work together to craft a good charter school law for Connecticut and I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today having been here at 7:30 this morning.

REP. STAPLES: Well, I hope you enjoyed your three minutes.

BOB EAGAN: Yes, I did. I've been practicing.

REP. STAPLES: Representative Beals.

REP. BEALS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Are you aware of any state where you would, that you considered had a good charter school law?

BOB EAGAN: Well, it appears to me that over the last several years as each of the laws are being

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enacted, they learn from the deficiencies of the previous states.

Most recently several months ago, maybe even three months ago, in New Jersey they passed a charter school law that I think would address many of the concerns that we in Connecticut have. It was a law that we use as models as we work on crafting legislation and talking about those initiatives with legislators.

And I would say to you that it was a law that the Association which had been seen traditionally in opposition to the governor's office. In the final days, the New Jersey Education Association and Governor Christine Whitman worked cooperatively to help pass that charter school law in New Jersey.

To me, that says that was a very significant move and had some pieces in it that we ought to be taking a look at.

REP. BEALS: And one other thing. As you remember, one of the issues that we had a problem resolving was the percentage of staff that should be certified and in discussing that the other day we remembered that, of course, we do have the alternate routes program to address some of the concerns that there may be people out there who are, who would be really good teachers.

Would you support, would your organization support an expansion of the alternate routes program? I understand it always has a waiting list.

BOB EAGAN: The alternate route program as you well know, is a very controversial program --

REP. BEALS: I remember.

BOB EAGAN: -- that was implemented here in Connecticut. And we look at that now as a form of certification. We see that as a method that's in place and quite frankly that's one of the reasons why we say, for folks who want to advocate no certification at all, the issue of alternate route process which is in place in Connecticut, will allow you to become a

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teacher and move you along in the cycle with the support and the mentorship and all of those components that go into place.

So we see that as a move forward in providing for certification of teachers.

REP. BEALS: But would you support an expansion of it? I understand it's quite a limited program and has quite a long waiting list?

BOB EAGAN: An expansion of it in terms of --

REP. BEALS: Numbers of people participating.

BOB EAGAN: -- numbers of people participating? If the funds were made available to do that, I think that that would be a positive move for us to support.

REP. BEALS: Thank you.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Representative Tymniak.

REP. TYMNIAK: Mr. Eagan, with regard to the charter school will, would you support a charter school that has a (tape ran out) or do you feel that this has just got to be a type of school that will accommodate any and all students?

BOB EAGAN: I think one of the problems in the bill, bill no. 59 which is before you. I think we have to be clear in what we are designing charter schools for in the State of Connecticut.

What's the purpose of a charter school? And when you talk about schools that are specialized, I think we have to be clear on what we mean by that because when I hear folks sometimes define charter schools and get into specialization, it very much sounds to me like it's a magnet school. A school with a certain vent so to speak.

So I think that in looking at the notion of charter schools, being specialized, talking about some form of specialization, defining what that means so that we all understand what the terms are for the creation of that school.

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REP. TYMNIAK: You wouldn't necessarily be opposed to a specialized charter school along the lines of a magnet school as long as what?

BOB EAGAN: Well, if the charter school is similar to the magnet school, then that's what it ought to be. It ought not to be classified as a charter school.

In our discussions where we have talked with states that have charter schools in place, their design for something that cannot happen or it has -- it is more difficult to implement in the public school arena.

For instance, one of the charter school programs that I attended a workshop on was charter schools that are in place which are year round. We, in Connecticut have a traditional calendar for our schools. A charter school in my mind is something that's radically different in some ways than what you have in the existing public schools.

So to use the words specialized or whatever that means or conjures up, I'm saying to you I don't want to get into talking about specialized like magnets because that's what they ought to be. I want to get into charter schools which are truly a new and innovative or unique and have some variation on what we have here.

REP. TYMNIAK: But by the very nature of the fact of the charter schools are not going to have as many restrictions on them as the magnet schools do, they might be able to take our students that step or two further by virtue of their relief from certain mandates that may be out there.

Don't you think that would be a worthwhile goal?

BOB EAGAN: You know, I want to be very careful that as we go into this charter school concept in Connecticut that there right now is no, there is not a large base of statistical information that tells us that charter schools will answer all of these problems or all of these concerns that people have.

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And as I've often said to folks when they talk about charter schools, I've been a teacher in Connecticut since 1968 and in education I've seen the walls come down and then I saw the walls get put back up. Then I had school, then we taught in schools where students didn't fail. And then we learned that life does deal you some failures, so we worked through that process of failure in schools.

If we're going to get into the charter school movement, then I want it to be a significant movement that we're not just going to do something to answer a call or a concern that's been in place and then in five years from now people say well, remember we spent those five years doing those charter schools and they were all to no avail.

So I think in crafting what it is that we want to do here, we want to be very careful in what the outcome, what the purposes of the school, and we want to ensure that these truly are the kinds of schools that we're looking for.

REP. TYMNIAK: The very nature of trying to be careful seems to imply with it there's going to be a great deal of control from Hartford to make sure that we're going to achieve that.

And if we're going to be trying to let people go out there and use their minds and expand and do things that maybe have never been done before, that seems to dictate against all that control, all that care that you seem to want to have at this end.

BOB EAGAN: I think Representative Tymniak the reason I say that to you is this: that I really believe as a teacher that we ought to have new and innovative ideas. But I also want to be very careful because while we're implementing these new and innovative ideas, we have young people sitting in our classrooms and they cannot be the subject of experiments that may lead to no positive success for them.

So that while they participated in this experiment that I want to be involved in, it wasted valuable

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time in their educational career. There has to be a clear understanding of what this is all about. And that's why the care is there.

REP. TYMNIAK: But unfortunately that kind of situation that you speak of does exist in some of our worst systems now, where students are there not getting a great deal of benefit out of the years that they are putting in.

So this might be a way to help add some competition to the system and get around that and those systems.

BOB EAGAN: You're not going to be able to compare what goes on in a charter school with what goes on in a public school if one of the premises that you build your charter school under, is that you want to do things that you cannot do within the traditional public school structure.

You won't be able to make those comparisons.

REP. TYMNIAK: Is my understanding one of the reasons we're moving towards the idea of a charter school is to be able to experiment and find things that we might be able to replicate in the vast schools, the other schools that exist in the system?

BOB EAGAN: I think there are things we'll be able to learn from charter schools. I think we'll be able to find that some of the difficulty in trying to implement some of the ideas that we may have in public school, for instance, around scheduling which tends to be a very controversial subject and how you do block scheduling or whatever type of scheduling that you do.

We may find that it may be easy to implement. From participating in the discussions on the issue of charter schools, I learned a lot of very interesting things. One of the things I learned is that the majority of the charter schools that are in existence in the country have less than 100 students in them.

They have some four to five teachers in them.

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You're talking right there a ratio of students to teachers that doesn't exist in the public schools, that's not subjected to the mandates and the requirements that we all have in the public schools.

So again, I like the idea of new and innovative ideas, but I want to make sure that we just don't move -- we move out in a manner that's very deliberate, that will produce positive results for both students and teachers and won't be an experience that we all say well, in Connecticut we tried those charter schools and they didn't work. Let's learn from what other folks have done.

REP. TYMNIAK: As part of your testimony you also indicated that you are against the idea of being able to have profit in the charter schools.

My understanding is that there are programs out there for-profit that are running charter schools throughout this country that are doing well.

BOB EAGAN: Not only as the President of CEA, but as a teacher, nobody should be making profit off of young children, No one should make profit off of students.

We're not talking products and business. We're talking young people education. And if there's any profit to be gained, that profit ought to be turned back into the school system. No one should be making money off a student's learning.

REP. TYMNIAK: So no matter what the result is, whether they are getting a better result from their students or not, that would not enter into your thinking with regard to whether we should allow into our charter school system companies are out there for profit?

BOB EAGAN: Well, based upon what just happened in Hartford, I think you'd want to be very careful with any kind of for-profit endeavor.

REP. TYMNIAK: Last question. What element of local control do you feel the charter school bill should

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have in it? If any.

BOB EAGAN: I think the issue of the local boards of education having control over those schools that are in their district is very critical.

You cannot have, in my opinion, in our opinion, you cannot have schools that are out there running with no one overseeing the operation. You want to demand accountability from those schools, someone has to ensure that that accountability is indeed transpiring and taking place.

And if you're going to be funding these charter schools using some form of either the local taxpayer dollar or the budget that's in place in the district, then someone ought to have a say over ensuring what's going on there and that is truly taking place.

REP. TYMNIAK: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Representative Barth, did you have a question?

REP. BARTH: Just one quick question. What is it about the New Jersey bill that was attractive to you versus some of the other states?

BOB EAGAN: I think the reality is that the New Jersey bill is a bill that takes into account some of the earlier legislation in dealing with the issues of charter schools in other states where they were making those bills initially at an earlier time.

I think the issue of control is dealt with in the New Jersey piece of legislation.

The issue of certification for teachers which is a critical issue for us is dealt with in that piece of legislation.

It has a piece in it that we don't like. It allows schools for-profit. We are not happy with that piece of the bill.

It talks about the schools and their establishment

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and what the purpose will be. It talks about how many -- it's very specific in nature in terms of addressing a lot of issues in the debate that I've been involved in as it relates to charter schools.

We have done an analysis of it. We'll be glad to provide it for you. And I would say to you that it takes into account a lot of the things that we're all talking about.

REP. BARTH: I'd love to get that, thank you.

JOHN EAGAN: Okay.

SEN. FREEDMAN: Representative Scalzo then followed by Representative Tymniak.

REP. SCALZO: Bob, I just want to make sure I'm clear on where you are because in your initial comments I didn't think you were saying what it appeared you were leading towards in response to Representative Tymniak.

Would you agree that if our charter schools end up simply replicating our existing public schools, then it's really not worthwhile to endeavor to create charter schools?

BOB EAGAN: If it's going to be identical to a public school, if it's going to be identical to a magnet school, it ought not to be called a charter school.

REP. SCALZO: Okay. In your response to Representative Tymniak it seemed like you were saying that at least the responses, in response to the questions you were being asked, it seemed though you were saying you weren't drawing any great distinctions between how a charter school ought to be structured, how a charter school ought to be accountable and how a public school is currently accountable now, a public school under local control.

Could you give me an example or give me some areas in which that structure and that accountability might be allowed to deviate from what's in existence today in our public school system to

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create the type of successful experiments that you'd like to see?

BOB EAGAN: I think if you have a charter school in place, there must be strong measures of accountability.

Now, if you aren't going to use some of the existing measures like the mastery tests or the CAP tests, then you ought to look at some other areas of measurement. For instance, there's a lot of talk today about portfolio assessment.

Maybe one of the things that we'll be doing is looking at portfolio assessment as it relates to the students who are involved in the charter school and looking at a total picture of their performance as it relates to this particular school, the education that they are receiving.

I am drawing distinctions and saying to you I don't want to have a charter school that has no accountability as part of its total system. I mean, I think it's very clear that you have to have accountability to the parents of those children, you have to have accountability to the citizens and the taxpayers and certainly to the legislature that may decide after the first year of implementation of a charter school bill that you may want to expand the numbers of schools that participate in charter schools.

So in trying to move forward and one of the other things is as you begin to develop what it is that you want in a charter school. I think one of the things that I liked in the New Jersey bill is it set a year prior to the schools that were in existence, for schools to develop a comprehensive plan for what they were all going to be involved in as they put forward a charter school with accountability measures, with admission requirements, with funding requirements and so forth and so on.

REP. SCALZO: But you don't want -- do you want or not want to give me some examples of how structurally these schools may be different? I mean, I

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understand your point that you don't want them to be free from local school board or regional control.

What would you see along those lines that you would like to see that would be different than what's in existence today rather than what you see that may be similar?

BOB EAGAN: Representative Scalzo, one of the reasons why that's a difficult question for me to answer is because we -- when you design a charter school and you have one in mind, you may be thinking to yourself, a school that has a certain philosophy, a certain persuasion.

And so one of the differences all come about as it relates to the set up of the school. Certainly in its most simplistic form, if you had a year round school, the year round school would be going -- the major difference would be the students would be going all year round. With different breaks divided up during the course of the year. The school would be set up quarterly and not -- I'm sorry, it maybe set up in a different time period than our present. Will be set up in a different time period than our present public schools.

And it maybe just those differences that maybe visible and some may not.

REP. SCALZO: Could it be that as a suggestion would you have a problem with leaving that statutory parameter looser so that they can -- the merits of an entire proposal for a charter school can be addressed and approved on a case-by-case basis, rather than trying to codify a very narrow definition which I think leads us down the road to what I was hinting towards before, replicating what is already in existence and, therefore, really wasting our time?

BOB EAGAN: I'd rather have you do it in the reverse. I'd rather have you be tighter in your restrictions and then as the years progress you say, we didn't need that. We can back away from that provision.

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Again, the whole premise that I'm coming to you today to testify in support of continuing discussions on charter schools, is if we're going to get into this then let's be very deliberate in what we're about to do so that we don't look back and say, we did that, we put the walls up and we took the walls down.

I don't want this to be like that.

REP. SCALZO: Right, but I think everyone would jump on board if they knew what was being proposed was going to be successful.

Lacking the crystal ball though, I mean it seems like you're saying we're going to have to live within a narrow framework with tight restrictions and then endeavor to go through the same process within the charter school system that we're currently addressing in a parallel course within our public schools, at least in the short time that I've been sitting here.

BOB EAGAN: I think one of the problems is there's a tremendous amount of education that has to go on with the citizens of Connecticut and the teachers in Connecticut and parents of children in Connecticut when you talk about charter schools.

What are they? What do they mean? I mean, I find that in my discussions I spend a lot of time trying -- myself personally, understand what charter schools are all about. Talking to other people about the notion of charter schools and so what I'm saying to you is I think to be more deliberate and prescriptive now will pay off in the long run.

And I'd rather have us do that because I don't want anybody just coming trying to run a school here in Connecticut, which they call a school, and the end result could be potentially disastrous.

REP. SCALZO: I share your concern for that. Thanks, Bob.

BOB EAGAN: Thank you. And you know your teachers are here. Well, I didn't want to let you know which

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one was my teacher.

REP. TYMNIAK: Two last quick questions. Would you have any opposition to our private colleges or universities setting up charter schools? That's question number one.

BOB EAGAN: I don't know about setting them up. I know that I'd like to see them play a role in working with a charter school. I think that's a question that I need to reflect on a little bit more.

REP. TYMNIAK: What about an institution or a group such as the Edison Project?

BOB EAGAN: No.

REP. TYMNIAK: What would your opposition to the Edison Project be?

BOB EAGAN: We are not interested in getting involved with the Edison Project, any other corporation. We believe that these charter schools can be dealt with within the state by people here who are ready to pursue charter schools.

We think there are folks here in Connecticut who would like to pursue charter schools. We aren't interested in a relationship with Edison or anyone else at this juncture, us personally, the CEA.

REP. TYMNIAK: Are you aware of any problems the Edison Project has had throughout the United States?

BOB EAGAN: I cannot give you documented evidence. I'm sure that we have material on, an analysis of the Edison Project, but I'm not prepared to answer that today. I'll be glad to provide that information for you.

REP. TYMNIAK: I'd appreciate that. Thank you.

BOB EAGAN: Okay.

REP. TYMNIAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. FREEDMAN: There is somebody sitting here listening

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that has some information about it also, but Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER: Thank you. One question for you. As I go through your likes and dislikes to add to it, what would your feeling be knowing that there have been great difficulties in the large comprehensive schools and the lower socio-economic distressed municipalities.

What is your feeling about looking at magnet schools as small pods within the larger schools where you mentioned before that the numbers, the ratios, the 20 to 1, certainly are not what we're seeing in today's public schooling.

Do you see that as a possibility of something you might support?

BOB EAGAN: Some of the charter schools that I am aware of are, in fact, within the existing public schools and they are set off in a specific area of a larger school.

And one of the reasons that has been done, at least from what I understand, is because the start up costs for these schools is extremely expensive. Construction costs and so forth and so on.

So if you use existing public school structures and you use existing public schools, you have facilities that are there.

One thing that I want to be sure that we do is that we talk about an all inclusive charter school. I want to be very careful that when we start to talk about charter schools in Connecticut, that we don't talk about charter schools which could be construed as schools for the elite. Or schools that are designed that at least appear to be the better than the rest of the other schools.

I want to make sure that I nurture that concept as we talk about the charter schools. Some folks talk about charter schools being for children at risk. Other folks talk about different types of persuasions as it relates to some theme within the

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charter school.

So again, I think trying to address your issue, you know, trying to be careful that you don't set up a system where you exacerbate race and other types of socio-economic agenda.

REP. SAWYER: But going back to the one comment that you made earlier, you are a proponent of smaller class sizes?

BOB EAGAN: Yes.

REP. STAPLES: Thank you. I think we've reached the time where our public hearing has come to a close. Thank you very much Mr. Eagan for all your testimony. This public hearing is over.

(Whereupon, the hearing was adjourned.)

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*Tape 1B  
Pg 8  
June 18*

TESTIMONY OF  
PETER B. TACY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

re. SB 58 and 59, HB 5071 and 5087

EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
March 11, 1996

CAIS has long urged this Committee to lead citizens and the Legislature toward an ambitious reform of public education. We have responded whenever you or the Governor have called on us to assist in efforts aimed at reform. That was most recently the case in relation to the Commission that developed these "Choice" proposals.

We're here today in the same spirit. The independent school community cares profoundly about the betterment of public education in Connecticut. Like every other institutional sector in the state, we have much at stake in the quality of Connecticut's public schools, and much to fear if the system's quality and equity needs are not addressed. We view the prospect of a strengthened public system with hope and confidence - but also with impatience. The job is so achievable, the resources are so strong, the people are of such quality - why in the world, with so much going for us, can't we get on with the job?

Perhaps the recommendations of the Governor's Commission on School Choice will initiate movement. In relation to "choice" experiments in other states and proposals debated in this body, the ideas are cautious, based on real needs and proven models. Though they may be catpaws of reform, rather than reform itself, they merit study.

It makes sense to remove statutory and regulatory inhibitions that bar school choice within the public system. Is there any good reason to do otherwise? It is prudent to expand the effective model presented by Project Concern, so as to offer better education to more kids, and lessen racial isolation. And while charter schools may be the most radical of the proposals you are considering, that experiment may pay off if it sows seeds of change within a public education culture that has been deeply resistant to change.

In particular, it takes little more than common sense to see why it is wise to promote expansion of early childhood education opportunities. The evidence is so enormously strong that this will be a productive step that it is amazing we have done nothing so far. The approach you are considering could catalyze progress in this area.

You've heard much about the evils of these proposals. I believe the worst that can be said about them is that, seen all together, they are so much less than the real, unmet need. It is time for this Legislature to face that need. Our children deserve it.

If choice legislation must be the first item on our state's reform agenda, the bills before you propose little in that line that is unreasonable. They may even bring progress. But whatever you do about them, a crying need will remain. It's time to meet it.

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Tape 1A  
Line #2

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
BY REGINALD L JONES, SECRETARY  
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT  
MONDAY, MARCH 11, 1996

GOOD AFTERNOON SENATOR FREEDMAN, REPRESENTATIVE STAPLES AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE. I AM REGINALD JONES, SECRETARY OF THE OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT. I AM PLEASED TO TESTIFY BEFORE YOU IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILLS 58 AND 59 AND TO OFFER SOME REMARKS ON HOUSE BILL 5698, AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON SCHOOL CHOICE

I'D LIKE TO START WITH SENATE BILL 58, AN ACT CONCERNING INTRADISTRICT CHOICE.

THIS LEGISLATION WILL ALLOW, BUT NOT REQUIRE, LOCAL AND REGIONAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP INTRADISTRICT STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PROGRAMS AND PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM.

INTRADISTRICT CHOICE LEGISLATION WILL INCREASE FLEXIBILITY IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND PROVIDE SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND PARENTS WITH GREATER OPTIONS IN CHOOSING SCHOOLS. WE BELIEVE THAT AN ELEMENT OF COMPETITION WILL BE FOSTERED BY CHOICE ALL TO THE BENEFIT OF CREATIVE TEACHING AND MOTIVATED STUDENTS.

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THE NEXT BILL I'D LIKE TO ADDRESS IS SENATE BILL 59, AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.

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AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON SCHOOL CHOICE RECOMMENDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS.

THIS LEGISLATION WILL ALLOW THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO BEGIN TO APPROVE UP TO 24 CHARTER SCHOOLS IN THE STATE. CHARTER SCHOOLS WILL PROVIDE SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND PARENTS WITH GREATER OPTIONS IN CHOOSING SCHOOLS.

SUCH SCHOOLS WILL, HOPEFULLY, DEVELOP INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION. TEACHERS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP ESTABLISH AND WORK IN SCHOOLS WITH ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION, SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT. COMPETITION WILL MOTIVATE SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE QUALITY.

MUNICIPALITIES WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE 100% OF THEIR AVERAGE STUDENT COSTS TO THE CHARTER SCHOOLS FOR PARTICIPATING STUDENTS. CHARTER SCHOOLS WILL BE PERMITTED TO RAISE ADDITIONAL FUNDS FROM PRIVATE SOURCES, BUT MAY NOT CHARGE TUITION. PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION WILL BE FOSTERED.

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HOUSE BILL 5698 INCLUDES THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF GOVERNOR ROWLAND'S COMMISSION ON SCHOOL CHOICE.

THE GOVERNOR IS GRATEFUL TO THE COMMISSION FOR ITS HARD WORK AND FULLY SUPPORTS THE OBJECTIVES PRESENTED IN THE COMMISSION'S REPORT.

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*Tape 3B*  
*pg 17*  
*line 13*

TESTIMONY  
ELIZABETH E. GARA  
CONNECTICUT BUSINESS & INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
BEFORE THE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
MARCH 11, 1996

Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth (Betsy) Gara, Assistant Counsel for the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA represents over 9,000 companies across Connecticut. Our membership includes firms of all sizes and types, the vast majority of which are small businesses with fewer than 100 employees.

**CBIA supports SB-59 An Act Concerning Public Charter Schools.**

Today's schools allow too many of our students to fail, drop-out or graduate with unacceptable skill levels. Despite mounting evidence that our schools are not working, people continue to defend the status quo. In fact, our schools have changed very little since the 1920s--and yet our workplaces, our economy and our lives have changed dramatically. To meet the challenges of today's global economy, we must reshape our schools to encourage innovation and results.

Charter schools operate within the public school system but are released from most regulatory requirements in exchange for developing and implementing a plan to achieve better results. By allowing teachers and school professionals to create a more challenging

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learning environment, charter schools will make valuable inroads in developing programs aimed at boosting student achievement levels.

Authorizing the creation of charter schools will allow schools to emerge with different operating philosophies, different academic specialties and different ways of responding to the needs of children and their parents. Right now, too many teachers and professionals are hampered in their efforts to create innovative programs that could produce academic success.

SB-59 also ensures program accountability through the issuance and revocation of teaching certificates and school charters, through the assessment of student performance and through the monitoring of school finances. More importantly, charter schools ensure accountability because their success depends on whether or not parents and students are satisfied with their programs.

Charter schools pose no threat to schools that are working well. But they can serve as models and encourage competition in schools where students are not achieving and parents and students are dissatisfied.

**CBIA also supports SB-58 which allows communities to establish voluntary public school choice programs.**

An education system that will prepare Connecticut's young people for the challenges of competing in a global marketplace is vital to Connecticut's future. Like charter schools, public school choice can serve to inject an element of competition into our education system that will drive creativity, quality and accountability.

SB-58 would also give parents and students the ability to choose an educational program best suited to their instructional and personal needs. Public school choice can



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Tape 2B

pg 11.  
line 24

TESTIMONY  
Before  
The Education Committee  
on

SB 59, An Act Concerning Public Charter Schools

Senator Freedman, Representative Staples, Members of the Committee I am Rob Daves, a member of the Regional #17 Board of Education and Vice President for Government Relations at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. CABE strongly supports the concept of charter schools, and that position was reaffirmed by our membership this past November. We support the enactment of enabling legislation to give local and regional boards of education the authority to grant and revoke charters, under the following conditions:

- the schools are non-sectarian
- the schools have non-discriminatory enrollment criteria
- the proposal has the support of parents and teachers.

It is extremely important that the locally elected board of education remain responsible for granting and revoking charters. It is the board of education that can best assess the ability of the charter school proposal to meet the needs of the school district. The proposal before you in SB 59 would grant that authority to the State Board of Education. With all due respect to the expertise of the State Board of Education, we believe it is contrary to a growing trend to move toward site based management and a reduction in state bureaucracy to vest that responsibility with the State Board of Education. Give boards of education the responsibility to grant charters, and evaluate the results in two years.

In addition, in this era of serious fiscal constraints in public education, it is inappropriate to create a situation where the State Board of Education could dictate the expenditure of local tax dollars for a charter school that was not supported by the locally elected officials. A study recently conducted by the Institute for Responsive Education for the Graustein Foundation indicated that regardless of type of school, small class size is a critical element of success. Supporting charter schools with local education dollars will force larger class sizes in those public schools.

We urge you to modify SB 59 to provide local and regional boards of education the authority to grant charters.

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**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT F. EAGAN  
PRESIDENT, CONNECTICUT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

**Education Committee  
Monday March 11, 1996**

*Cassette 4A  
pg 72  
Line 13*

**Concerning Public Charter Schools**

SB 59

Good afternoon. My name is Robert F. Eagan. I am President of the Connecticut Education Association which represents some 30,000 public school teachers. CEA and its members support the passage and implementation of any proposal, including a charter school law, that promotes the betterment of public education and fosters greater educational opportunities within public schools for all children.

However, when one looks at the more than 20 states that currently have charter schools one realizes that there are *good* charter school laws and there are *bad* charter school laws. We want Connecticut to have a good charter school law. A good charter school law *should do* certain things and *should not* do other things.

A good charter school law *should not* be a means of dismantling public education, *should not* be used to make money from children, and *should not* be a means of subsidizing religious and other private schools with taxpayer dollars.

A good charter school law *should* promise the use of innovative instructional strategies that improve teaching and learning and *should not* simply focus on decentralization and deregulation.

A good charter school law *should* make sure that charter schools will be not-for-profit and non-sectarian.

A good charter school law *should* create truly public schools that have open admissions, and meet the need of all students. Charter schools *should not* exacerbate or reinforce class, race, or educational stratification and the law *should not* allow charter schools to receive more funds than traditional public schools or drain funds from existing public schools.

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A good charter school law must assure that certified teachers and administrators work with students. Maintaining professional standards is of paramount importance in Connecticut. When the Education Enhancement Act was passed, it didn't just raise teacher salaries, it implemented the most rigorous teacher training and recertification requirements in the country. There should be no retreat in a good charter school law from the high standards that have been set for and required of public school teachers.

A good charter school law should require that students and teachers alike be covered by the same anti-discrimination, civil rights, safety and health regulations, federal constitutional guarantees, tenure and collective bargaining laws that govern the local school district. By their very structure, charter schools are experiments. Therefore, students and teachers should not have to give up any protections in order to participate in these experiments. This would only serve to discourage rather than encourage participation.

CEA's Representative Assembly, which is our highest governing body, has passed a resolution calling for the investigation of charter schools in Connecticut. For the past several weeks, I have participated in several Connecticut Charter School workshops with education stakeholders including members of the General Assembly. I look forward to continuing this dialogue as we all work together to craft a good charter school law for Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today.