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SB0458

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winners this year.

Nice work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you.

As an old joke says, by going up in history, you'll go down in history, so congratulations. Great to have you here. Thanks for joining us.

And we're about to start our discussion of education, which is quite appropriate.

(Chamber at ease.)

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The House will come back to order.

And will the Clerk call -- please call Calendar Number 5 -- 458?

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill 458, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL REFORM, LCO 5186, introduced by Senator Williams and Representative Donovan.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Esteemed Chair of the Education Committee, Representative Fleischmann, you have the floor, sir.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move acceptance of the joint committees' favorable report and passage of the bill.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The question is on acceptance of the joint committees' favorable report and passage of the bill.

Will you remark?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say thank you, not only for recognizing me, but for all the work that you've put into the measure that's now before us. I -- I share the opinion of many that we would not be here today discussing this bill if it weren't for all of your time and effort and consideration.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you very much.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

I'd also like to thank the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader who put a lot of time and thought into this; my ranking member, Marilyn Giuliano, who shared lots of thoughts along the way and who has been a great partner at the Education Committee; and the

Black and Puerto Rican Caucus which has made education its priority for a few years in a row but has never had more impact than it's having today with some of the wonderful elements of the bill before us.

You know, teamwork is needed to turn a school around. Teamwork and collaboration are needed to turn a district around, and teamwork and collaboration are needed to craft a complex piece of legislation. And I think that's what we have here. We had education stakeholders coming together, working together, to find something that could work for all of them so that whether you're talking about one of our lowest performing schools or one of our challenged districts, all stakeholders would work together, and this bill reflects that kind of commitment to collaboration and teamwork.

I'll run through a couple of the major areas in which it does so. Early childhood education, this bill before us establishes 1,000 new preschool slots in Connecticut, of which 500 are to be in our ten education reform districts, also known as our lowest performing, neediest school districts; 250 in our other priorities school districts; and 250 in our competitive grant districts, which in plain English

are districts with pockets of poverty in need, priority schools in those districts.

We expand a wonderful pilot program started last year to improve our reading assessments so that we have greater understanding of where kids are having difficulty reading and can do better interventions. And then along those lines, we create a pilot program that will provide reading supports for children in five different schools, responding to what is found through that enhanced reading assessment.

We're addressing the needs of our neediest schools by creating a Commissioner's network. A network that will eventually have 25 of the state's most needy and underperforming schools rolled into it in the next three years. We give the Commissioner the authority that he needs to go ahead and make sure that he's presented with a model that works or, if not, he refines it until it does, or maybe even offers a model that he knows will work. And to make sure these schools get what they need, we're talking about giving ten more family resource centers, increased support for family resource centers, 20 new or expanded school-based health clinics. So all of that really addresses the needs of these schools that are in

trouble.

When it comes to school funding, a lot of people have asked me, What's going to be happening as compared to what was discussed in February? And the answer is simple. The -- the very sensible model that our Governor proposed on February 8th to have more supports and more dollars to the districts that need it most is preserved. We've got enhanced funding for the districts that have the greatest need, and if you want to know by how much, you could look at the numbers that were released on February 8th. We've preserved those numbers.

Second, for alternative schools, we've made sure that we have increased funding for those, whether you're talking about technical high schools, vocational agricultural schools, magnet schools, charter schools. All of them are seeing major increases in state support to allow them to do what they need to do.

Finally, I heard from a lot of colleagues from small districts with concerns about consolidation proposals. We're going to study. We're in a study what happens with smaller districts and whether they can consolidate and be more efficient but not force

them into anything until a study is complete.

Teacher preparation. We're going to go ahead and make sure that someone who wants to be a teacher in Connecticut spends more time in the classroom before they're -- they're completing their program, four semesters of time in the classroom learning the practice of teaching.

We're setting up a distinguished educator designation for our top teachers. This will be folks who have gone and gotten the very highest ratings, and they will, if granted that designation, be able to go ahead and take on additional responsibilities and maybe earn additional pay.

We're going to require the Commissioner to create a new professional development program for reading instruction. Again, our focus being on making sure that by grade three, children have acquired strong literacy skills. And we're going to make sure that for getting a professional certificate, instead of getting a collection of various different courses, you'll get a relevant master's degree.

This idea came to us from various directions, teachers and administrators who said, let's -- let's go ahead and have the education add up to something

that's really useful in the school, and we believe this master's degree will be.

Finally, the topic that has gotten so much attention and discussion, teacher evaluation and tenure and dismissal. We're saying there are going to be annual teacher evaluations based upon this collaboration we've had on the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, which includes teachers, administrators, folks from the State Department of Ed who worked together well so far and will continue to do so.

We're going to have a pilot program next year for eight to ten districts to make sure that the new evaluation system works. We're going to have UConn checking that evaluation system to make sure that it works.

There was a question about whether tenure happens automatically, and we're making it clear that tenure will be granted by superintendents only after they review evaluations and they affirmatively decide to give tenure. So that notion of someone just showing up -- which is not something that I ever witnessed in the first place -- that clearly is not how it will work under this bill. You will have your evaluations

reviewed and find out whether you get to -- to become a tenured teacher.

And finally, it requires that those who are conducting these evaluations get trained in how to do so. It seems logical, commonsensical. We make sure in this bill that the evaluators are themselves properly trained and evaluated.

So, Mr. Speaker, I -- I, again, thank you for the work that you and so many others have put in to -- to help get this bill before us today.

I believe I have moved acceptance to the joint committees' favorable report and passage of the bill. And I hope members on both sides of the aisle will join me in supporting this measure.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Giuliano of the 23rd District. How are doing, madam?

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, very well.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Please proceed.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Mr. Speaker, this is a rather exciting afternoon.

It's the culmination of an entire legislative session's worth of work on Connecticut's education reform and, as you know, and as every member in this Chamber realizes, Connecticut really has not even attempted major reformative change to adjudge educational system in perhaps about 30 years. And perhaps, I date myself, Mr. Speaker, but I will admit that in my early practice, I recalled and knew Connecticut to be a state among the United States of America at the top of its class for education. And over the course of that career and over the course of those 30 years, we have come to the bottom of the heap, regrettably.

This jumpstart that we call, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION REFORM, is an important first step. I had hoped, Mr. Speaker, that it would be a bold leap. And there have been a number of factors that have slowed our growth. But, at least, I'm here to say today that we are making steps in the right direction.

We heard input from people over two days of public hearings totaling 21 hours. Anyone who sits at public hearings understands how long that is. But, also, two days of public hearings over 21 hours is a benchmark of how interested that the public is in this

topic of education reform.

And given the late hour at which we received this bill last night, I simply want to walk through it to give people a sense of this document as a living document that will direct our reformative changes in the near future and also to ask some questions for clarification and definition, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

. Please proceed, madam.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we start out with expanding preschools slots. We have 500 for our lowest districts, 250 for priority districts, another 250 for competitive school districts. People might want to know, why is it so important to have all these early childhood slots, what's so special about preschool, can't we fix it once we get them in a classroom?

Well, you know it might surprise some people to understand that the foundations of early literacy and numeracy, reading, math, writing are laid in those early years, three years old, four years old, five years old. It's the important prelude to kindergarten. And so by opening up 1,000 new slots

that is an important step.

Education reform is built as a -- almost like a stool, Mr. Speaker, and there are important legs that one must have, and the leg of preschool preparedness is one important leg, and there are others, as we speak.

But, Mr. Speaker, through you, to the distinguished Chairman of the Education Committee, a question. Through you, Mr. Speaker, how many slots can we accommodate at this time? I'm understanding from the language of the bill that we will be funding and making accessible 1,000 slots. Do we have space to accommodate that number? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. We had our Office of Fiscal Analysis do some analytics on the spaces that are available in all of the different categories that my good ranking member has mentioned. And in each case, there are more spaces needing filling and funding than there are spaces provided for in this bill. So there should be no problem in making sure that those thousand early childhood seats are filled

in the coming year. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And the reason for my question was I had read a report from the Governor's Office that we really have the space needs to accommodate closer to 700. So I'm -- I'm glad that the good Chairman can verify that, in fact, the number that is being funded will clearly be the number that -- that we can accommodate in need.

As we look at the 500, the 250 in the noneducational reform districts, the priority school districts, I'm also interested in the definition of "competitive school districts."

Through you, Mr. Speaker, just for the sake of our understanding, what is -- what is a competitive school district? Through you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

A competitive school district, if memory serves, is one that meets one of a few different potential criteria. One would be that it has a priority school

within it. A school that has been identified as -- as being like a school in a priority district where there's a high level of children on free and reduced price lunch, et cetera, and challenges with academic performance.

Another standard for a competitive district is having an overall percentage of children who are on free or reduced price lunch. I believe another standard relates to the ratio of the grand list to the -- the cost of educating the children.

In short, these are districts that have pockets of need, pockets of poverty, and children who -- children -- a child in need is a child in need wherever they may be found. And in competitive districts, you find children in need who could use these slots.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the gentleman's answers. Obviously, we are directing our initiatives in terms of early access in the -- in the right directions.

You know, like my colleague, Representative Fleischmann, in his opening remarks he did thank the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus for their very astute and energetic initiative with regard to early literacy.

And as we talk about the legs of the stool, Mr. Speaker, I would say that this is the second leg. Because early literacy, setting the foundation for language and learning, is essential. The prelude of which is preschool access, which lays that foundation for early literacy.

But I do wish to compliment the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus on this initiative, because it is not only well-founded and appropriate, they have consummated this initiative in this bill in a manner that reflects state-of-the-art teaching and scientifically-based research interventions. And I don't say that lightly. I say that with great specificity. I say it with great complementarity to the caucus --

A VOICE:

Thank you.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

You're welcome.

The initiative cannot be underestimated. Early literacy, to understand how kids read to break it into the component parts of the sounds of letters in language, is a science unto itself. I'm especially pleased that this initiative was developed and -- and proposed, and the proponents are a group here in Connecticut. I've been trained by them so I can speak with great authority on the efficacy of these interventions.

But, through you, Mr. Speaker, a question to the proponent of the bill. In my reading of this, with regard to early literacy -- and we're going to have to bounce back from the beginning to the end of the bill as it is written -- but it says that the Commissioner of Education may identify schools to participate in the study for the purposes of promoting best practices in early literacy so as to close the achievement gap. And all of us in this chamber realize that when we say "may," while we -- the Commissioner may and the Commissioner may not.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, some understanding of, why we would make permissive such an important intervention that would be a critical component of the closing of Connecticut's very wide achievement gap.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the language of that section reflects the fact that there is sometimes fluidity while we're drafting -- with regard to what's happening with funding. And I'm happy to report that we have provided enough funding in the Appropriations' budget that was passed through this chamber last night to all of the Commissioner to go ahead and expand the pilot for the reading assessment to at least ten more schools and to extend a pilot that provides reading interventions and supports that reflect the fine-grained information that comes from that new assessment to five new schools. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I thank my colleague because that clearly is movement in the right direction. My concern was that despite the efficacy of this intervention, the

intervention itself, perhaps, would be too narrowly applied to be measurable in a substantial way for Connecticut's children.

You know, it also says on line 116 that the Commissioner may accept funds from private sources or from any state or federal grant. Through you, Mr. Speaker, would the Chairman of the Education Committee please assist me in identifying what those other sources might be, because clearly this intervention of early literacy has real primacy in our narrowing of Connecticut's achievement gap? Through you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the language cited is broad intentionally. Commissioner may accept funds from private sources and from any state or federal grants. There are a variety of federal grants that can be directed toward reading, support and interventions, including, I think most Title I dollars.

There are a lot of state grants that can be directed in this way, including priority school district funds. And private sources, you know, there

are plenty of private foundations in America and in Connecticut that recognize, as you do, the importance of early comprehension of -- of reading and literacy, and we're hopeful that some of them may be supportive as well. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the response, and certainly support the initiative because clearly the early literacy dimension of this very large bill of education reform with many moving parts is a critically important dimension. So that it could be as expansive as possible, I would certainly -- certainly support movement in the direction of federal aid and private grants.

You know, one of the points of debate, since the rollout of education reform at the beginning of this legislative session, had to do with a rather controversial piece that affected I know all of the towns that -- that I represent and all small towns in Connecticut, and that was what we originally came to know as the small-town penalty. And over time and

over discussion and over many meetings with the Commissioner and his staff, we talked about the small-town penalty. And people on the list, the towns on the list, shifted somewhat. And my assurance was that the small-town penalty as a disincentive would not be included in the final version of the bill.

Now I understand that the intent here is to effect regional collaborations and cooperations, the intent is to reflect cost savings, perhaps where there were none. But at least from my side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of us who represent small towns. And now it appears that the small-town penalty has moved from a penalty, as such, to a study of possible penalties.

If I may, through you, ask the Chairman of the Education Committee, what does he envision to be the content of the study and the disincentives that should be applied? Because clearly some of our small towns are also some of our most high achieving towns. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. The concerns that my

distinguished ranking member and others raised about the -- the small-town section of the bill were well heard and that's why we have a study in this bill.

The study essentially is intended to examine what it was that the administration proposed and what impacts it might have. It was brought to the attention of the committee through the public hearing process, as well as through discussions, that there are small districts that have tremendous results and that we wouldn't want to somehow undermine those results. So we've asked a relevant group of stakeholders to go ahead and look at, you know, the potential impacts, positive and negative, of this type of plan and report back to us.

And I can't really prejudge what they're going to say, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if there were many involved in that study who had, you know, concerns and outlooks similar to those of my ranking member. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I -- I thank the gentleman for his response.

Clearly, those of us who are on that list wish to be removed from that list. And it --it struck me as peculiar, although I support the idea of the study. What struck me as peculiar is that regionalization and regional collaborations were being stressed as a reason for why we would continue to take a look at towns for the possibility of small-town study. And in at least one instance that I'm aware of it was a regional school district that was identified as a target of this study.

But I appreciate the response and hope that in moving forward, we can better understand the inherent efficiencies within regional school districts.

You know, the state is -- the Department of Education will prepare a statewide performance management and support plan and it will classify schools, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, based on their school performance index and other factors. Now, these -- this school performance management support plan really is replacing schools in need of improvement, and it's ranking them according to categories of need, as I'm reading it, and sorting subject area performances.

If I might ask, through you, Mr. Speaker, of the good Chairman, how does the state intend to use this

information? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. As described in the bill, there are different levels of supports and interventions made with schools based upon the school performance index and other indicators, and most important of these is that those schools found at the bottom 5 percent of all Connecticut schools can be considered for inclusion in the Commissioner's network. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

(Deputy Speaker Altobello in the Chair.)

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Good afternoon, madam.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

As we move along, we're looking at school governance councils. Now school governance councils

actually draw from the community to create a composition of people who would have skin in the game, so to speak, Mr. Speaker, to handle a number of responsibilities. And if I might just enumerate a few of them: Analyzing school achievement data, reviewing the fiscal objectives of a draft budget, providing advice to the principal, participating in the hiring process of the school principal.

As I looked at that, two thoughts popped to mind, school governance councils, insofar as they embrace important stakeholders, parents, community members, teachers, are very important and very necessary. However, one of my concerns was that what we are asking them to do: Analyze school achievement data, review the fiscal objectives of draft budgets, provide advice to the principal, participate in the hiring process, and assist the principal in making programmatic and operational change to the school, Mr. Speaker, these are very technical -- it's a technical and sophisticated litany of tasks for this group.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Chairman of the Education Committee, what resources will be in place to assist these well-intentioned stakeholders to perform their duties in a competent manner? Through

you.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. First, let me point out, school governance councils are already in place in schools across Connecticut. This is not something new to this piece of legislation. Support for those councils has come from the administrations of the schools and from the school districts.

Under this bill those councils would be empowered to work with turnaround committees that -- that would also be working with the Commissioner to try and figure out if a school is in the bottom 5 percent, what model might best suit it if it were to join the Commissioner's network. So you've got the turnaround committee as well as the entire district supporting the work of the governance council. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It would seem to me, with regard to my question

about the assistance and supports that we might offer to those stakeholders, there may be more that we need to do, but I thank the gentleman for his answer.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move on to section 28 of the bill. And this section treats organizing failing schools into academies. Now that is an idea that the research bears out as interesting and efficacious when we talk about how to form student cohorts. What I'm trying to understand about this is we're talking in this bill that's -- the school be organized in academies, each containing a maximum of 175 students divided into different classrooms by grade.

And what I'm -- my question, Mr. Speaker, through you, is what is the reason behind such a specific cohort? You know I understand in constructing an ideal campus, so to speak, let's say for example on a middle school level, that 500 kids -- the research indicates and practice indicates that that's a pretty good number, but we know that from practice and research. In terms of constructing these academies, what is the reason behind this specific cohort of 175 students?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that my good colleague please direct me to the line number that she's looking at so that I can get the full context of her question.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

I'd be happy to, Mr. --

(Speaker Donovan in the Chair.)

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm reading in section 28, and I'm referencing specifically line 1877 through 1879. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I thank my ranking member for giving me the line number. As I suspected, the language that she's

citing actually is in existing statute. It's not new language, and I believe that five years ago now when we were looking to go ahead and establish ways to turn around schools pursuant to No Child Left Behind, this was something put in statute. So we have chosen not to revisit or modify what was put in statute five years ago because it has been used and found to be good practice. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I thank my colleague for his response.

You know one of the topics that received a lot of attention as we spoke about education reform and, perhaps undue attention, as we spoke about education reform was the issue of teacher evaluation. How do we do that fairly and equitably? How do we do that in a way that is most supportive of student growth and is most efficacious of the talents and strengths of the teacher in the classroom? And, you know, that whole issue, the conversation about teacher evaluation, was one that, at some points, nearly eclipsed the entire conversation about education reform in Connecticut,

although this is a large bill with many important moving parts.

And teacher evaluation reminds me of someone whom I know as a teacher and she has a rather interesting story, Mr. Speaker. And I think that I should tell it to you today because it has great illustration for us in trying to understand how we link teacher performance with student assessment and learning and how we make a fair and equitable marriage in that regard.

I'm going to tell you about my friend, Mrs. Fudge. Mrs. Fudge is a kindergarten teacher. She's a mom, she's a grandmother and she's a longtime teacher. Now she's a teacher's teacher. And what do I mean by that? I mean the parents clamor to get their kids into Mrs. Fudge's classroom. Why is that? Well, Mrs. Fudge is a pretty good teacher, actually she's an excellent teacher.

But Mrs. Fudge is a little concerned right at this point in time because the state of Connecticut calls Mrs. Fudge a failing teacher. Failing teacher you might say why, why would that be? The teacher that parents clamor to get their kids into. The teacher who's a mom and a grandmom and very successful

long time teacher, a teacher mentor, a kindergarten team leader. Why would Mrs. Fudge be a failing teacher?

And this -- this is an important point because Mrs. Fudge is such a good teacher that when the principal needs to put a particularly tough-to-teach student into a kindergarten classroom, she turns to Mrs. Fudge. She's a unique professional. She's certified as a regular education teacher, and she has a dual certificate as a special education teacher. So Mrs. Fudge is prepared for any kid who enters into her classroom.

And as we all know, especially at the kindergarten and primary levels, kids come to school in all kinds of ages, believe it or not, because in Connecticut it is and it persists as our law that you can be four and remain in kindergarten. You don't have to turn five until January 1 of that kindergarten year. So we can have four-year-olds who come to kindergarten, five-year-olds, and you can actually turn six while you're still in kindergarten.

But let's think about that developmental range, the four-year-old to the six-year-old all in the same classroom. You know, every single kid -- and you

might not always think of kids this way -- but each of them has what I call a neurodevelopmental clock. So what the heck is a neurodevelopmental clock? Well, that is a pace and time, the unfolding of developmental assets and attributes that that individual kid goes through. And you can't change kids' neurodevelopmental clocks. You must wait for them because some days they're able to do something. The day that they can attach a letter to a sound, the day that they can write their name, the day that they can't take a T and cross it at the midline, those are all neurodevelopmental markers. But that clock is different for every single kid. And sometimes I think when we think about maybe kindergarten teachers, we might think, well, gosh, that's a pretty easy job, it's kindergarten, what do they do kindergarten, they have fun, they color, they do their letters, they sing songs. Kindergarten is -- is foundational and fundamental.

And here we have Mrs. Fudge. Mrs. Fudge, being particularly expert at kindergarten, and yet, a failing teacher in Connecticut. And when I review our guidelines for teacher evaluation in Connecticut, Mrs. Fudge and her story jumps immediately to my mind,

because, once again, I want to apply those benchmarks of fairness and equitability as we link what a teacher does in a classroom to how a student and what a student learns.

Now Mrs. Fudge is such a good teacher that each year the principal comes to her and says, Mrs. Fudge, I have this kid that's four years old, birthday is at Thanksgiving, real nice kid, you're going to like him, he doesn't speak English, I think he'd be good in your classroom.

And that's not the only story that Mrs. Fudge is approached about by the -- by the principal who values her, this failing teacher. Mrs. Fudge, I have this young kid, he's on the spectrum, he has a significant developmental delay, but he needs to be in a mainstream classroom, he needs to be with other kids, he needs those experiences, and you know something, he's smart, really he is, but it's going to be hard to reach him because he doesn't have the skills, really, to be good in a group, and sometimes he doesn't listen and there are some behavioral concerns. Would you take him, Mrs. Fudge?

And Mrs. Fudge takes kids who are learning disabled, kids who have difficulty with the basic

competencies in school. Why? Well, I think I mentioned, she's a mom, she's a grandmom, she's a veteran teacher, she's a good teacher, and she's got those special certifications, regular Ed and special Ed. She's one who has the skills to do the job well, and yet, in Connecticut, she is a failing teacher.

And when I look at this rubric for evaluating teachers, I think first and foremost of my friend, Mrs. Fudge.

And let me explain to you how you get to be a failing teacher in Connecticut. You can recommend that this young boy who didn't turn five years old until almost Christmas of his kindergarten year, who doesn't speak English, may, in fact, have some learning difficulties, you might feel as a teacher that that -- that boy could profit from more time in that grade level, perhaps he should be retained. Sometimes we consider time to be a gift because after all that neurodevelopmental clock that I was talking about before, well, it gives it time to tick a little more. The skills fall into place. The success has come along.

But, you know, when Mrs. Fudge makes those recommendations, if a parent says, yes, I agree with

you, let's give my child that gift of time. That's how Mrs. Fudge becomes a failing teacher. But she's caught in the very bad bind here in Connecticut because she's a real asset to the faculty. She can reach kids that other teachers can't reach and she can take our youngest learners and really work with all of their strengths and skills and make them competent and make them feel that success. And feeling that success is the most critical lesson that Mrs. Fudge can teach.

So through you, Mr. Speaker, if I might ask the Chairman, for us, because this has been such a big conversation in Connecticut, because it is a conversation with many stakeholders, teachers just won parents want to know about this, school boards want to know about this, communities and taxpayers want to know about this. If we can walk through how the teacher evaluation model, as specified, in Senate Bill 558 is going to roll out. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

First, I want to say outside Willy Wonka's chocolate factory, I haven't met many people named

Fudge, so I hope this teacher wasn't teased too much as a child. But the evaluation system will roll out in the manner that we've discussed, with eight to ten districts piloting it in the coming year and then the Commissioner -- oh, the University of Connecticut assessing the results of that pilot and assuming that it works properly with validation both bottom and top scores, a rollout across the state to follow. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I -- I thank the good Chairman for his remarks.

And I'm hoping as time goes on and that rollout occurs that this is piloted in a variety of school districts that have different demographics, urban, suburban and rural, as this is piloted in a number of different schools, as teachers have input into this along with administrators, parents and other stakeholders that we might find how to craft that fair and equitable linkage of teacher evaluation to student learning. And I hope that because in so many other

categories we allow for mitigating circumstances.

And when I tell you the story about Mrs. Fudge and kids who don't speak English, our English language learners; kids who have learning disabilities, those who can be instructed in traditional ways but will not profit from that instruction in traditional ways; kids who have significant emotional, behavioral or psychiatric disorders, and yet in a free and appropriate public education, are included in mainstream classrooms but need the special skills of a special teacher, I'm hoping that we can build in those mitigators so that good teachers, like Mrs. Fudge, will no longer remain under this new rubric, a failing teacher in Connecticut.

Mr. Speaker, part of the bill deals with an increase in education cost sharing funds to the towns of Connecticut and, in fact, $50 million has been invested for that purpose. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I did not notice in the bill that any of this money was tied to achievement; is that correct? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure I would share that assessment. The way I would put it is this way, the lion share of the $50 million just mentioned goes to the state's 30 alliance districts, the districts that have the greatest need. Those districts don't automatically receive the funding. It's conditional funding which means that each of those districts will have to submit a district improvement plan; that plan will have to follow the outlines of what we have in this bill before us, which involves all sorts of detailed plans for turning around schools and the overall school system's results.

Once they have demonstrated that they have such a plan in place, they will receive their dollars. So they will have to and in -- in some sense, demonstrate excellence in strategic planning for turning around their districts. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Giuliano.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the response.

And, in fact, I appreciate this ability to walk

through this very large bill with many moving parts with my colleague from the Education Committee. I find that it -- this particular initiative of reform started out as a bold leap. Over time, over debate and over negotiation, it has become much more narrow and circumspect. Some of that is fiscal reality, some of that is negotiation, some of that -- we'll leave that.

However, I support this bill, but I support it with disappointment and reservation. In all sincerity, I'm greatly heartened at the opening up of preschool access slots. I understand their impact, but I want us to keep our real goal in mind, Mr. Speaker, and that is narrowing and actually closing Connecticut's achievement gap, which has widened to one of the worst in the nation.

The emphasis on access is critically important, one of the legs of the stool. The Early Literacy Initiative is critically important, though substantially narrowed, made permissive and unfortunately underfunded. I almost -- if I had to pick and it is so hard to sort through the many moving parts of this large bill and the many important initiatives within this bill because they are so

interdependent, the early literacy is perhaps the most important.

I'm glad that we are moving forward in that direction. We also need the ability to intervene and intervene dramatically in our lowest performing schools. Once again, this bill does that. It does it in a manner that is too narrow for my tastes, but given that the bold leap has been reduced to the small steps in the right direction, Mr. Speaker, I will accept this at that -- at this time.

As we move forward, I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that as the many studies that are peppered through this bill come to some fruition and are brought back for their evaluation to the State Board of Education, to the Commissioner's Office, to the Governor's Office and to the educations -- to the legislature's Education Committee that we can find a renewed robustness to tackle the problems that besiege Connecticut at this time.

I will give this bill my support with disappointment but with the hope of future robustness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Deputy Speaker Godfrey in the Chair.)

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, ma'am.

The gentlewoman from Wilton, Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very much. I'm glad I timed that well enough to get back here.

Thank you. I am glad that we find ourselves here discussing an education bill. This has been a somewhat awkward process. I talked about that a lot last night so I won't dwell on it now. But I will say that I'm not always going to be able to give the line numbers for my questions because of having to work off all of these documents at once in a very compressed time frame so I'm -- I'm going to, in advance, thank Representative Fleischmann for his indulgence, if I am not always able to cite a line number or don't always have some of my facts straight since the bill is a recent acquisition of mine.

There is a lot to like in this bill, I find, and I could list some of those things right off the mark: the preschool slots; the conservation of new state funding for charters; the Early Literacy Initiative,

of course; the fact that the forced regionalization is gone; the chart of accounts; the turnaround mechanism, decoupling evaluations from certification for teachers -- that was something really I found unacceptable in the first version -- a shorter dismissal process that makes everything a little easier for everyone; of greater value placed, once again, on the acquisition of a master's degree; the role of practical training in professional development; also the requirement for training and evaluations as -- as teachers go through professional development and administrators as well.

Also the way that the bill responds to a number of concerns that were expressed by educators and that were addressable, like giving broader authority to a -- to a council or a committee in the case of turnarounds, some questions they had about nonprofits, some questions about collective bargaining and turnarounds. All those were addressable and I think the bill has addressed them.

There's a few things the bill doesn't do. I think it's lacking in measures to keep our exemplary schools exemplary because we do have some. One size doesn't fit all, and it would be nice to see more of an acknowledgment of that -- and also some rethinking

of -- I know we have a ECS task force that is operating right now, but there's an attempt to take an interim measure before we do a major fix, and I'm not sure that's the right way to go.

But that said, I have a number of questions for the good Chair of Education and I wonder if I could ask them now, Mr. Speaker. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Proceed.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you so much.

My first question is in section 3, just a technical question about the coordinated system of Early Care and Education and Child Development. There's been a change in responsibility from the Early Childhood system to the State Department of Education, and I just wondered about the reason for that. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this relates to the fact that in another section of this bill we empowered the State Department of Education to develop

a quality rating and improvement system for our Early Childhood programs.

This is something that has been discussed for a long time and is finally getting implemented. Since the State Department of Education will be in charge of that quality rating and improvement system, it seemed to make sense to have -- to have them responsible for all things related to it. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I thank the gentleman for that answer.

In section 4, there is a reference to the extension of the Early Literacy pilot from the school year starting in July 2012 to the school year starting July 2013, and I wondered if there had been any plans made for that initial year whether anything was already moving forward, or we're just pushing this a little farther into the future. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. There are three

districts that are already piloting this new assessment. They have found it to be extremely helpful, far more useful and fine grained than the traditional DRA that has been in use for decades in Connecticut. The measure before us make sure that at least ten more districts will get access to this new finer grained, higher tech reading assessment. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

Moving to -- well, section 5, new statewide reading assessments, and then I think this question applies as well to the -- to the later sections in the bill when we get into the Early Literacy Initiative, which by the way is, I think, one of the crucial parts of this bill and I'm glad to see that it figures here in so much detail.

But I do have one question, there is a lot of space devoted to what would be assessed, how assessments will be conducted, how educators will be trained, how they will be endorsed, et cetera. I did want to ask about one specific thing, when we had our

public hearings on the Early Literacy bill, which was the precursor to this section, we discussed one of the factors that was generally recognized to be responsible for a decline in literacy rates, not just among certain populations that either don't speak English at home or are economically disadvantaged or in -- in other ways different from the rest of the population, but also just generally, that there has been a decline in literacy and reading capability, and that is because of some changes in the way that reading has been taught.

And I wanted to know whether there is a clear shift in the -- the training and the assessment criteria in these parts of the bill in this program that will be indicative of a clear change in the way that reading is taught. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

That was a good short answer to a very long

question. I thank the gentleman.

When we come to section 8, family resource centers, which clearly have some focus on school readiness and parenting skills, some educational services. I'm just curious about whether there is any concrete part of the description of their role that involves reading aloud, reading between parents and children, et cetera. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the best practices that is used in FRCs.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

And in section 9, that off the -- probably off the beaten track of the main subject matter of the bill -- there's a physical exercise requirement for grades K-5, 20 minutes. This is, I think, duplicative with the bill we've just passed.

Is there any -- any relation between the two? Are they -- is this just simply a -- sort of an

accidental duplication? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. It's a duplication but it's not accidental. There are many studies that show that for young children it's critical that they get a certain amount of physical activity and outlet each day, and so it's in a couple of different bills because we wanted to be sure that one way or another that was part of our Educational Reform package. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

And so I moved to the next section, which is a municipal aid for new teachers program. And I'm -- as I read this, it seems to be -- and for clarification, is it part of -- one of the incentives to get the best teachers to -- or the best prospective teachers to teach in the most difficult or most needy districts? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

And -- thank you.

And so there is a -- there are grants of up to $200,000 to each of the ten ed reform districts. Does this allow them to pay these people more than they might make in another district? Is there an actual salary incentive? Is there something that would draw them more to those districts than somewhere else? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

And what is that differential, if I may? How -- how would it compare to what they might get at another district?

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the Commissioner working in conjunction with the Education Reform districts will develop a plan that is as effective as possible. $200,000 is sufficient to create some major salary and bonus incentives for top quality teaching and educational personnel. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

There is another -- just -- section that we have discussed in our March 26th meeting of the Education Committee, section 13 on exemplary schools. The language here was not highly detailed to begin with, but it's -- it's become fairly minimal now, and that's someplace where I actually did have line numbers -- and if it takes me too much time to find them, I won't put us through that. I tried to mark the page. Yes, it's lines 265 to 267, the Department of Education may publicly recognize exemplary schools and promote the

best practices used at such exemplary schools. What does that mean? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the language is clear on its face. The Department is able to go ahead and point out that certain schools have achieved excellence, and if they're able to identify the practices that have led to the excellent results, draw attention to those practices through its website or through publications of the Department. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

I -- I will say that I -- the discussion that we had on March 26th indicated that being designated an exemplary school might also lead to some privileges for those schools, not just recognition. And this is a part of the bill that I find diminished, and I -- and I -- I'm disappointed by that and I can go into that in a little bit more detail later -- but I'm -- I

thank the gentleman for his clarification of the language.

In sections -- I'm sorry -- I have here only 15 and 16 because I'm looking at the OLR report, but it does say that the bill requires the State Department of Education to impose select measures which it allows the Department to define on individual schools in the context of the chart of accounts. Could the good Chair of Education explained to me what the select measures might be? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I -- you know, I believe this is going to fall within the -- the discretion of our Commissioner of Education in our State Department of Education, but the notion is that we're seeking greater clarity and transparency regarding how school dollars are spent. So, I would not be surprised if select measures included an effort by the Department to have school systems parse how many dollars are going to classroom instruction, how many dollars are going to the central office, many dollars are going to materials and supplies. This

sort of classifications that would allow any parent, any taxpayer to see whether dollars are being allocated wisely in the school system. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

Another section of the bill, which I think I've already said I was pleased in, and I have people in my surrounding towns who are also pleased to see significantly diminished in the bill, is the regionalization section for small districts. And that has become a study and I'm just observing that the things that are to be studied regarding the consolidation of small districts are still financial disincentives, such as a small district reduction percentage.

And when we discussed that in Committee and I think on other subsequent occasions, we use the carrot and stick analogy and refer to that as being more of a stick, more of a disincentive, more punitive. And since there have been many, many discussions since that meeting at the end of March, I wondered if the

good Representative could enlighten me as to whether there is any thinking at this stage or whether there is a complete open mind, vis-à-vis, what this study might turn up in terms of incentives versus punitive measures. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. I believe there are open minds on the question of incentives and disincentives. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

And, do I understand that the -- the results of that study will be brought back to the -- to the Education Committee in the end for us to emit a collective view, possibly a vote? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. The results will

be brought back to the Education Committee January 1, 2013. It is in the purview of the Education Committee and the General Assembly what it does with such recommendations.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I'm sorry?

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I'm sorry. Thank you. Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

Okay. There is in -- pardon me, while I find the section number -- I'm in the turnaround schools section which I am -- I'm sorry. They're -- they're very bulky documents, and I wish I had had more time to mark them properly. Well, this is the -- the part that discusses the special master law, and in the case that there is a special master, it mentions that there's a requirement that the State Board of Education require the school board to ask the union representing a school district bargaining unit to reopen an existing contract to revise employment

conditions. The State Board must ask must unless the union comply. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. If the good Representative could let me know which section and/or line number she's referring to. It's really difficult for me to respond without more specificity.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

And I do understand that. And I am sorry that it's difficult to get through all these documents, but it is section 18, and it appears to be toward the end of section 18, and I don't have a line number. I apologize for that. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Mr. Speaker?

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, you know, it is -- it's a long bill and it's hard for me to know for sure precisely which subsection is being referred to. But I believe the answer is as follows: There must -- in a -- in a situation here where we're talking about a network school, there -- there must be a response. The Commissioner has this power to put in place a special master and that special master, in turn, has various powers over the operation of the school.

Collective bargaining rights are respected, but if there is a finding of a need for turnaround, a turnaround committee shall be put together and that committee must either come up with a plan for a turnaround of the school, which is approved by the Commissioner; or if it does not, the Commissioner may indeed go ahead and require a model and then that model is collectively bargained over. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

I -- this was particularly in the case of when a special master is assigned, and I think that the issue

was really how far can the special master go in terms of requiring the union to open the contract to revise certain employment conditions or whether they could simply have a discussion and the union can continue to prevail. I think that's the sense of what I wanted to know there. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. Without a specific line citation, I find it impossible to answer the question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I do understand that, and I'm sorry that I didn't have more time to be able to get into specific line numbers. One day, perhaps, that will be possible.

All right. I'm moving to section 19 (c), where we have a discussion of Commissioner's networks school, audits and inventory, and this is a very interesting section where the criteria are listed for what would be covered in an audit of a -- of a prospective network school or school that is just been

chosen, and all the different things that the State Department of Education would look at, such as, what sort of work environment is in that school, what are its family and community connections, how is its leadership, how does it use time, what is its curriculum, how effective is its staff on all levels.

And I wondered actually going through this whether we are actually creating here a sort of -- whether this has the potential to create a template for what an effective and well-performing school is and whether that might be one of the goals, for intent? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Would the good Representative care to elaborate on that at all? Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann. Do you care to respond?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I -- I think that this section really speaks for itself. It's there -- you've got a full inventory of things that are happening or, perhaps, not happening at the school, and that inventory reflects what evidence has shown to be some of the best practices.

So, for example, if there is ineffective leadership, if there is a lack of job embedded ongoing professional development, if there is lack of effective use of time that would be identified and best practices that have been developed in high performing schools would be part of the turnaround plans. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I thank the gentleman for that answer.

I have a -- a more general question now on a -- on a subject that is -- has been of great interest and -- and was a topic of great concern for many of my constituents and others, which was the status of collective bargaining and union contracts in the case of a turnaround Commissioner's network school.

And what I wanted to ask Representative Fleischmann was if he could just elaborate for us on the question of how the -- I know the existing contracts remain intact, but how exactly does that work? What -- what -- in what cases can conditions be created that are -- that don't necessarily respect those contracts? In what cases do they not prevail? How does the -- how does the process work? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. As I understand it, when a school has been identified as potentially becoming part of the Commissioner's network, there are some different tracks that can be followed. A turnaround committee is formed. If that turnaround committee develops a model that is acceptable to the Commissioner, then there is expedited bargaining over how to implement that model.

If the model essentially matches some other high-performance districts or -- sorry -- schools that we have in the state of Connecticut, you would have something called impact bargaining, which would really

focus on just the basics of how the extended school hours or school day should affect the compensation of the professionals in that school.

If, on the other hand, the model were one that were really different from any other model in Connecticut. For example, requiring far more hours or a far longer school year, then there would be collective bargaining that would cover a broader array of issues, including that major change to the mechanisms by which the school would operate.

But in all circumstances, there would be expedited collective bargaining so that we could get in place a new model for this school that's in trouble as quickly as possible. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you very much.

That is -- really, as you know, been one of the -- one of the sticking points, and I think this goes a long way to clarify that.

In section 19 (e), there's another -- another subject that was of concern to some which was the involvement of nonprofit management organizations, and

I think that their characteristics and which ones are allowed is -- has been, as far as I can tell, very clearly delineated in the bill. I do have one question which is when an approved not-for-profit educational management organization is brought in in the case of a turnaround, how is it compensated? Who pays the fees? And how are they determined and how are they approved?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. This is the Commissioner's network. In that network, there is a mixture of funds. There are the local funds that are already there through the LEA paying for basic services and there are additional funds that come through the State, which is providing support for the Commissioner's network. So, it's expected that whether you're talking about an operator of the sort my colleagues has just described or -- or any other organization brought in to help run a Commissioner's network school, there would be a memorandum of understanding, such memorandum would spell out very

clearly the type of funding arrangement set up between the -- the Commissioner, the local education agency and the operator and that the funds going to the operator would probably be some combination of local funds and state funds. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

Is there any preordained approval process for how that -- for -- is it the Commissioner who has the authority over the -- the terms of payment? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. The Commissioner has authority over the models that will be set up in the Commissioner's network. I think, as a result of that control, the Commissioner will also have a great deal of say about how the models are implemented and what sort of memoranda of understanding are reached. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

In that -- in the same section when there are different descriptions for how a -- a turnaround plan is chosen and there is consensus and no consensus, and so on, there is a reference -- and again I apologize for the line number but think this will be self-explanatory -- when there is no consensus or no plan or the plan has been deemed to be deficient by the Commissioner, it says that the Commissioner, in consultation with teachers and parents of the school, must develop a plan. And I just wondered how -- how does that consultation actually occur? Is there a formal process or is it to be determined? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. This General Assembly, in general, tries not to micromanage its departments and commissioners but rather set a framework that they can operate within. And I think this section is a good example. You're talking about a situation where

there hasn't been an acceptable model put before the Commissioner. The Commissioner has decided he or she needs to put forward a model that's going to be as effective as possible. For a model to be effective, there needs to be buy-in. There needs to be collaboration among all of the stakeholders. So, we are saying, quite clearly, in statute that we expect there to be consultation with these various stakeholders who are elaborately enumerated and the details of how that discussion and consultation occur are left to the Commissioner as I believe they ought to be. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

And I think that's a good thing. I have heard again and again calls from -- from parents and from teachers and even sometimes from students to be involved in the process of how things are managed, and I -- I think that the involvement is certainly a good thing.

I do have another question regarding the management organization, in this case, a nonprofit

that is actually brought in to play a role in the case of a turnaround. What exactly is that role? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. If my colleague could repeat the question. I'm not sure I fully understood it.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

May I, Mr. Speaker?

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Thank you. I'll be happy to.

The -- when a management organization, a nonprofit, is brought in to conduct or oversee a turnaround, one of the things I notice is that the organization does not become -- and that's fine -- the employer of the school's principal, administrators or teachers. What I was interested in -- in finding more

about, for legislative intent, is what exactly its role is. Is it simply an advisor? Does it actually set the course? Does it manage? Does it give orders? Does it set curriculum? What exactly does it do? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I thank my colleague for the clarification. So we have in Connecticut some excellent nonprofit school operators who have models that have led to great results in their schools. Those include curricula, hours of operation, ways of supporting students outside of class, and it's expected That if such a 501 (c) (3) were selected to be part of the Commissioner's network that it would bring that model to bear in the school where it was selected. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

And the interplay between the role of the management organization and the actual administrators

of the school, how does that work? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I expect that that would be fleshed out in a memorandum of understanding. So, you know, at this point, it's really speculation.

My speculation would be that the operator that was in possession of the excellent curriculum, the excellent after school supports, the excellent approach to time management, and so forth, would be encouraged to bring those models into the school and help the leadership of the school effectuate change. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In -- I'm sorry. Let me get the section number here -- in alliance districts, which is section 34, there -- there is a lot of information about the State Comptroller's ability -- and I actually think it's obligation -- to hold back ECS grant increases from

the alliance districts until they see a plan for how it will be used, and so on and so forth, and then there are subsequent references to conditional funding.

So, does conditional funding in all cases referred to just the ECS increase, or does it refer to other kinds of potential funding, as well? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

It refers just to the ECS increase. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Okay, thank you. That's very helpful.

Pardon me.

Yes, if we move on to sections 37 and 38, which deal with the distinguished educator designation, which -- which has remained from, I believe, the second version of the bill. And there's some detail here about what it takes to become a distinguished educator. I wondered if the good Representative could

explain for us when someone is -- is designated a distinguished educator, apart from the recognition, are there other privileges that accrue? Is there increased compensation? Is there -- are there other responsibilities? Are there other things that the person so designated receives? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. Through the process of collective bargaining, the local that has distinguished educators may bargain for additional responsibilities for these distinguished educators and additional compensation. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

So, there is just a final one question. There is then an incentive for people to pursue that designation? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you very much.

Moving into the professional development section, which is 39, there are quite a number of things listed in terms of what professional development time should be spent on. And I noticed there's quite a lot of language that talks about fostering collective responsibility, alignment, teachers working together in groups, and so on. And I wondered if this was in some way in a guise of response to some of the concerns that I know many of us heard about the importance of our collegiality in teaching and the -- some of the concerns that the other versions of the bill evoked in terms of discouraging that and how you thought this might address that issue? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. This section reflects testimony and studies that have been done on best practices. And it has been shown that, you know, top-performing schools and school districts, include as part of their professional development, team educational efforts where there's a sharing of challenges, sharing of data, sharing of best practices, so that no teacher feels that they alone, in isolation, have challenges to address, but they are part of a professional team taking on challenges together. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

I do think that including that in professional development might be somewhat reassuring to some of the educators who expressed a lot of concern over earlier parts of the bill, and I was glad to see that, so I'm glad that that confirms my impression of why it's there.

Let me see. In the -- in section 51, where there are guidelines, programs for teacher evaluation, et

cetera, there is a section on guidelines, and there's a reference there to auditing ratings and that that might be done by an -- a State Department of Education approved third party. And again, I wondered how that third party might be compensated. Would it be by the local district or by the -- by the State Department of Education? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the answer to that question is by the State.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

And moving further along in that section and here I do have line numbers, 3609 to 3615, here I'm just seeking clarification of the language. The -- it's about waivers for compliance with the State Board of Education evaluation model guidelines. And basically, it says that any district that already has guidelines that substantially comply with the State Board of Education's guidelines for evaluations doesn't have to

comply. That seemed to be a little circular to me and so I just wondered if I could get some clarification. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. There are some districts in the state of Connecticut that have already set up evaluation systems that will meet the sort of criteria that we expect to be laid out by the Commissioner of Education. And in the instances of such districts, we thought waivers would be appropriate. There's no need to reinvent the wheel. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

So those districts could simply continue to work with the evaluation model that they have without having to go through any further approval process; am I correct? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, if they received the waiver described in this section, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

In section 52, this is a section that concerns the Teacher Evaluation Pilot Program for the 2012/2013 school year where the Commissioner has to select eight to ten districts to participate, and those districts will run private evaluation programs. Here, my question is -- is this, I understand that the evaluations will run, teachers and administrators will be trained in how to conduct them. They'll have a process. It will happen. But what I'm particularly interested in -- in knowing is -- is what is the goal? Is it simply to see if it works, or is it to tie those evaluations to something, or is it to see if the evaluations lead to recommendations for improvement that are then followed and that lead to improvement, or to see if they identify teachers who aren't performing well? I just am seeking some clarity on the goals of that pilot. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of this pilot program is similar to the purpose of most pilot programs we undertake in the state of Connecticut. We have here what is a new process, and we want to make sure that it works in a way that it has been designed to work. So, many of the factors that my colleague has mentioned will be examined.

In essence, we're trying to make sure that the system works, and that when someone gets an evaluation, it indicates that they're below standard that a third party validates, indeed, that that was the correct finding. If someone is found to be excellent or exceptional, third-party validation shows that that was indeed a proper finding. So, it's really a -- giving us a chance to kick the tires on this new system and make sure it works before rolling out -- rolling it out across the state more broadly. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

So if -- if I may just for further clarification, it's really to corroborate the efficacy of the criteria used by the evaluation whether they correspond to some kind of reality? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

Moving to section 57, it's -- it's certainly very clear here, this is teacher tenure and termination. It's very clear that something I referred to before that -- that evaluations here are certainly no longer tied to certification, which was -- which was something I'd certainly saw as a difficulty in the -- in the first version of the bill.

I wonder if I could ask Representative

Fleischmann simply to explain what in this section is the relationship between -- and the intent of the bill in regard to the relationship -- between evaluations and the granting of and retention of tenure, if any? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this section is quite clear in saying that a superintendent, in making a final decision about whether or not to grant a teacher who has completed four years of teaching tenure, shall take into account the evaluations that have occurred annually during those four years.

It has come to the attention of the Committee that there are school systems that have not done the work we would hope they would do in annually evaluating teachers so that by the time that four-year mark is reached, there is, you know, the appropriate basis for that decision.

In addition, this section makes it clear that the superintendent must make an affirmative decision to grant that tenure rather than simply extending another letter offering employment for the fifth year of

employment.

Finally, I believe it's this section that makes it clear that if a teacher, at any stage in their career, receives a -- a very poor evaluation that is validated as below standard by a third party, that that person gets an improvement plan, that the improvement plan responds directly to the weaknesses that were found in their teaching practice and that they have a year in which to -- in which to improve their teaching in the specific areas where they were found deficient.

If they improve, they reach safe harbor. If they don't improve, they're then subject potentially to dismissal. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you for that clear explanation.

I've moved to the part of the -- of that section that concerns hearings on terminations, and I just wanted to verify if I'm reading it correctly, and that the grounds -- the hearings may be held on grounds of procedure in cases of termination but not on grounds of cause. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. That is not my recollection of the bill. If the good colleague would point to the section that she believes, you know, leads to that conclusion I'd be interested. But my recollection is that the proceedings could cover both the process and questions about whether or not the evaluation was fairly and effectively arrived at. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you.

And I really wish I could do that. It is in -- I'll tell you and if we can't find it, I will desist for the benefit of the Chamber -- but it's section 57, and in the OLR report it's the part entitled, "Termination Hearing Requirements and Procedures," and then there's a list of the things that it does to streamline the process. One, two, three, four, five, and this is number five, but if the -- if it's very shortly before the table that explains the termination

process. If that's not clear enough, I understand.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. So, you know, the OLR summary does compress what is in the bill, but in plain English, the hearings can cover both. Whether or not the evaluation was fairly and reasonably arrived at, in other words, you know, in terms of content, was this a sensible evaluation or was there a problem with it? And then in addition, were there problems with the process? I think it's important -- I appreciate the question. I think this is an important point to bring out. There were versions of this bill that said there could only be discussion of process if there were a hearing on -- on this type of termination. And neither I nor most of the colleagues I spoke with agreed that an -- a hearing that focus exclusively on process would be fair. Fairness involves a hearing that allows someone to -- to discuss all the key matters at hand, and that's what would be permitted under this section. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you very much.

I appreciate the answer.

I -- I have one more question regarding the bill, and it's in the -- the section about early literacy. We don't need a line number for it, but in -- again, in general terms in the precursor version of the literacy language, the other bill, there was a provision that did not allow a child who is in third grade who had not attained third-grade reading level to leave third grade until he or she had attained that level. And I believe is -- is that included in this bill? I don't believe it is, but I'd like to clarify. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

That provision is not included in this bill. Although, in public policy terms, it has a certain logic to it.

In the General Assembly, we look at a lot of factors and that policy change would have imposed major cost burdens on school districts across the

state of Connecticut, and I've heard -- my good colleague who's asking me questions now and others often raise concerns about unfunded mandates, and it was perceived that this would be a costly mandate at a -- at a time when districts are financially struggling. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I thank the Representative for that answer. It -- it's -- it is -- it is certainly a concern. There are two sides to that issue. And I think what we -- if this is -- if this is the way that we deal with it for now, I think we must hope that the measures that we're on the point of taking in -- in these early literacy programs will be so strong and so effective that we will have fewer and fewer people in third grade who need to stay there because they can't read well enough, and that's really what we should be aspiring to anyway.

So, I -- I thank the Representative for his answers and for his patience with my having to leaf through these documents.

I just want to make a few final remarks. I think

there's certainly a lesson in the process that we all went through with this bill and its history since February 8th. And the major one is this, you can't make a significant and really overwhelming change to people's lives and then announce it to them one morning as a fait accompli and make -- and expect that they will take it well and that they will take it sitting down.

I -- I worked in communication for many, many years, and I managed a lot of communications programs for layoffs and things like that, and when you're going to do something that affects people significantly, there is a way to tell them about it, there is a way to consult them about it before it's announced as a done deal. And I think that that's what happened in this case, and as a result, a lot of educators, particularly the teachers, became very, very upset with certain things that were in the bill. And the result was a process which ended up not being a discussion, a reasoned discussion of the pros and cons of every single provision in this -- in the original bill because there were a lot of them and none of them were perfect, but instead the entire exercise became kind of a reaction to the people who

were the most concerned. And they certainly deserve that attention, but not to the exclusion of all the other provisions in the bill.

I have the feeling -- and I am sure some of my colleagues did as well -- that throughout this process I didn't really get to think, is what is in this bill the best way or the best set of ways to make sure that our young people learn and learn better? In fact, in my best judgment, is this, what we have before us, the best thing for us to do? Are there alternatives we didn't consider? Are there other things we should include? Is there something we should take out? Instead, it was very fast and it was more reactive than anything else.

The good part is, is that where we are now is that we've ended up with some time. We have some pilots. We're going to let them play out in literacy, evaluation, school turnarounds, and we could take some of that time -- and that's a good thing -- but we can't take too much time because the problem's urgent. We still have this largest achievement gap in the country hanging over us. We still have falling graduation rates. We have absolutely precipitous remediation grades in our community colleges and

universities. And we now are seeking this No Child Left Behind waiver and, hopefully, this bill will help us get there. And I hope it does because this is our youth, our culture, our economy, our quality of life, our future, the state of Connecticut.

I'm concerned about the money because we know what situation we're in budget wise, but it's something we have to do and I'm glad we're making the effort.

I feel rushed and most of all because of the process, I'm sorry to say I -- I feel that my constituents and those of everyone else have been disrespected. I really think there's more we could have done. There's harder we could have worked.

But in the end, I feel I can't oppose this bill. I think it would be wrong. We've got to move forward. There are good things in here. So, if I can't oppose it, I must support it. And that's what I'll do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, madam.

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to make some comments about this bill and, hopefully, to ask some questions, maybe if I --

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Maybe a little -- maybe in a few minutes.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

-- if I extend my comments a couple minutes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

This would be a good time.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

I get the message.

We've been through quite a process this session with regard to education and the -- I believe that we got off on the wrong foot on opening day. Certain comments were made that tended to isolate the various interests of this bill and -- and put up walls rather than bridges. And I don't think that this bill ever was or should be about teachers.

There were some parts in this bill that I absolutely could not abide, and I'm glad to see that they have been minimized or eliminated in the bill that's before us now, specifically, the connection between evaluation and certification. I'm glad to see that that's gone. The possibility of punitive measures directed at small districts who did not

regionalize readily. I'm glad to see that that's been minimized and turned into a pilot program.

I absolutely think that any year should be the year of education. That's how highly I value that part of our society and the benefit that education provides. You know, without education, we're all -- always one generation away from social extinction and so it's always pertinent, always relevant, and that's clearly demonstrated by the amount of focus, attention and press that this bill has gotten in its various forms.

I do have some questions, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to say that I am working from the OLR bill analysis, so I'll be able to identify sections but not line numbers. And I hope that the good Chairman of the Education Committee can abide with me on that.

So, if I may, section 1 has to do with new school readiness programs spaces, 1000 spaces. That's wonderful. I -- I absolutely agree that if we're going to correct problems of achievement gap, if we're going to correct problems of remediation at the college level, the further back we start, the better the opportunity for success and the more appropriately our money is spent.

My question has to do with the arrangement of the seats that are being offered for the various districts: 500 seats for educational reform districts; 200 for priority district -- 250 for priority districts; and 250 for competitive districts. And I'm just wondering if there is a continuum with regard to those districts in some manner relative to urgency or need and if the numbers that are applied are directly proportional to the urgency that those districts suggest? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. We believe that these numbers reflect both the urgency of the need and the capacity. For example, in the education reform districts, we've identified approximately 600 seats that may be available and so we're seeking to fill -- excuse me -- 500 of those as quickly as possible. In the remaining priority school districts, there are many children with need and we have assigned 250 seats in the competitive districts as discussed previously.

There are priority schools with thousands of children who are not getting preschool who could use

it, and we have no doubt that all of those slots will be used. So, both in terms of priority and capacity, we believe what we put into this legislation reflects the need we've identified in Connecticut, not -- not fully. We need to do more, but this is we leave the right start. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I -- I certainly concur that this is a great start. I think that, as I said, money focused at the lower end of the educational growth curve is more well spent, even if it occurs below the constitutional mandate for what the State needs to provide.

Section 4, early literacy pilot extension, talks about a pilot study to promote best practices in early literacy to close the achievement gap and -- and there are -- there's a procedure in the bill to identify schools to participate in this study. Is that -- is that procedure directed exclusively through SDE? Is it -- does it come out of the Commissioner's office? And are there options, or are those schools identified

based on performance and without -- without any choice on their part? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. In this, as in other areas of the bill, it's our intention to have collaborative processes, so we expect that the Commissioner will be having discussions with a variety of potential partners for this pilot.

A good partner is a willing partner. Someone who's -- who's interested in -- in the pilot. In this case we already have three examples in Connecticut where the pilot has shown that it gives far better results in terms of assessing a child's early literacy gains than the current direct reading assessment. So we don't foresee any challenges here and -- but we expect that there will be a lot of -- of different partners who will be seeking to work with the Commissioner to extend the pilot that's already in place. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I appreciate that answer. I -- early literacy, of course, is crucial and the teaching of reading at early levels takes on an ever-changing dynamic as a student matures and grows through the process and in that regard, section 5, statewide reading assessments appears to focus on assessments that identify kindergarten through third grade students who are reading deficient. And my question is much for purposes of legislative intent, as it is for my own personal knowledge base, has to do with why the threshold of third grade was chosen. In my experience as a teacher, I could share that third grade is a crucial tipping point, perhaps, in that a child, a third grader, is a very different reader than a fourth grader, and in some ways that is purely a function of how aware the third grader is of his or her classmates, his or her abilities, his or her progress, such that in fourth grade, a student may well become discouraged, disappointed, embarrassed, wherein third grade that doesn't happen quite as much, and therefore, I'm -- my question has to do with whether or not the Chairman of the Education Committee concurs with those expressions as to why the third

grade was chosen as the terminus for that range for the statewide reading assessments? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. If I understand the question correctly, I believe I do agree. Achieving literacy by third grade has been found to be critical to a student's academic success in all the years that follow. And so, for example, in section 5, it's easy to note that we're looking at reading assessments used for kindergarten through third grade to identify reading deficiencies and, of course, we have scientifically developed evidence-based practices to overcome obstacles identified by a good assessment.

So, our goal is to have quality preschool and then to have quality assessments and quality teaching and supports in kindergarten, first, second and third grade so that by third grade, a child has achieved the level of literacy that we believe all children ought to achieve and is therefore well placed for academic success for the rest of their career. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I -- I'm glad to see that we are like-minded in our respect for the process at the early levels, K through three.

I would like to ask a question, make a comment about section 8, family resources centers and school-based health clinics. I know that over the years that -- of my teaching career, schools were asked to take on more and more of the needs of families and children, of course, and some of the requirements that society sets in their way.

And so section 8 suggests that the Commissioner will establish at least ten new family resource centers. If I might, for purposes of legislative intent, ask what the parameters of a family resource center would be? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. Family resource centers are, I believe, already defined in statute.

They are resources for both parents and young children. They help the parents understand the power of reading to children, playing with children, engaging them in various ways, and they expose children to all sorts of different activities that promote early literacy, early numeracy, and early social and emotional skills. They've done a great job in all the schools we have them in today.

And the purpose of this section is both to expand the number of centers we have in Connecticut and to expand the amount of support we're providing to each center. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And as a follow-up just so I understand, the section talks about school-based health clinics, but it doesn't say school-based family resource centers. Would family resource centers be more of a community scenario and, therefore, not specifically directed toward the students and families that attend a specific school? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. In my experience, family resource centers are collocated within the schools but are open to families that may be beyond the -- the area of the school. So, for instance, someone may have a toddler, two, three, four years of age, they may live a -- several miles away from a school that has a family resource center but may participate in the offerings of that center along with families who live closer to the school. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that answer.

Section 12 talks about open choice program incentive for larger districts and specifies that the focus of this section is on districts with more than 4,000 students. I would -- I would ask on what -- on what information or intention the number -- the threshold of 4,000 students was chosen? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague may be aware, the State is currently operating under an agreement pursuant to the Sheff versus O'Neill matter, and that agreement stipulates that we must reach certain levels of integration in the Sheff region.

The most cost efficient way for us to do this is to have more children moving across district lines, whether they're coming into Hartford to excellent Hartford schools or going from Hartford to excellent schools in other towns.

It's my understanding that the State Department of Education chose this threshold because it determined that using this incentive, the State could have a much better chance of reaching its goals under the Sheff versus O'Neill agreement. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And that makes perfect sense, I appreciate that

answer.

Section 19 has to do with the Commissioner's Network schools, and I understand from the OLR analysis that the timeframe is July 1, 2014, the Commissioner would select up to 25 schools. And my question is that is that selection process exclusively in the purview of the Commissioner, and is there some option involved, or is it a basis of performance and, therefore, simply a matter of analyzing the diagnostics to decide which 25 schools the Commissioner might choose? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. The legislation intentionally gives the Commissioner some latitude. If you look at that section of the bill, it talks not only about the school performance index but other indicators of difficulties within a school. So the Commissioner will be able to go ahead and exercise some discretion in determining which schools seem best situated and most in need of becoming part of the Commissioner's network. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that answer.

I would now move to section 36, professional educators certificates. And my question on this section is very simple. Would the three-tiered -- would the three-level certification system that we presently have, and the fact that in July of 2016 the qualifications for professional certificate are going to increase, I'm assuming that -- that whole framework is -- is -- has the benefit of some grandfathering for any teacher that has already reached some of those thresholds prior; is that true? Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I -- so I -- I don't have the line citation in front of me but I -- I believe that's correct. I believe it's a prospective change where we would not strip away a level of certification that someone who ready achieved under the current rules. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Distinguished educator designation, which is a -- a high and noble sounding classification, sections 37 and 38, lays out some parameters for what a teacher must accomplish to be considered for a distinguished educator certification or designation. And the -- the number 4 here in the OLR analysis says, meet performance requirements established by the State Department of Education.

I'm wondering if those performance requirements have yet to be fleshed out, have already been fleshed out or already in statute or are going to be determined by some basis going forward? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify it, this is a question about distinguished educators in section 37 and 38; is that right? Or is -- because there are so many sections of the bill with criteria.

I just want to be sure I know what I'm being asked about. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, that's correct. And my bill analysis says that the bill establishes a new distinguished educator designation and sets up one, two, three, four requirements. The last of which says that the educator designee must meet performance requirements established by SDE. And I'm just wondering if those are already available, if they're yet to be determined. And as performance requirements, they must -- do they have any flexibility from district to district, or -- or do they have any flexibility depending on the level of teaching that the educator is taking part in? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the clarification. I believe that the State Department of Education will set forth

requirements that are yet to be created because they relate to an evaluation system that has yet to be rolled out. But once those performance requirements are put in place, I think the goal will be to have some essential uniformity across the state so that it's known that if a -- if a person has achieved top ratings in their profession for a certain number of years that they can then qualify as a distinguished educator. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Moving onto section 57, teacher tenure and termination, I would like to assume -- and I'm asking the Chairman if I'm correct in assuming that the definition of tenure throughout this section and throughout this bill is the -- could be characterized as the privilege or right of due process? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. I think

that's a fair brief characterization.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And in the bill analysis, states the law presently and talks about that a employee must have a -- completed a specified period of continuous service. It doesn't say four years here but I'm asking if that's to be assumed from this bill analysis and/or is it actually part of the bill before us? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. It is in the bill before us. I don't have the line number, but 40 months, which is four school years is listed as the period of time in the bill. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Further down, talking about grounds for teacher

termination after July 1, 2014, a district could terminate a teacher -- and some of the criteria set out for that determination talk about inefficiency or in competence. I noticed it says, "inefficiency or incompetence" so one or the other would be requisite to -- to -- for the process to proceed along towards termination. And if so, does the Chairman feel that inefficiency and incompetence are subsets of each other, or is one of them a smaller set than the other; in other words, is one contained within the other or are they distinctly separate? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the ability right now to do a Venn diagram that would give me, I think, a full and accurate response to that question, but if I could reframe it a little bit. I do view ineffectiveness or it inefficiency and incompetence as separate standards. And the standard regarding inefficiency or ineffectiveness relates to the evaluation system that we are putting in place, whereas incompetence is a lower bar that has already

been defined in common law. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that answer.

As we were talking before about the kindergarten through third grade diagnostic process for reading for fluency and reading success, I noticed in section 91 that there's a kindergarten through grade three reading program, and it states that the SDE will a coordinated statewide reading plan.

Might the Chairman share with me what is meant by "coordinated in a statewide reading plan"? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the -- the notion of coordination is actually spelled out fairly clearly a little bit farther on in the bill. It involves making sure that the plan is aligned with reading standards that we already have in our state; that teachers and students are using data from these

better assessments in order to -- to develop plans for individual children in a uniform way across the state; and that the collection of information about the student's reading background is done in a uniform way.

You know, there's a -- there's actually a long list both in the bill and in the summary that my colleague is using that sort of describes what is really required for a good plan for a district and should be in a plan for the state which offers guidelines to district. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative LeGeyt.

REP. LEGEYT (17th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that answer.

The reason I asked the question was I wanted to confirm that the word "coordinated" wasn't to be confused with the word "standardized." In other words, "coordinated" might have meant to be coordinated across the landscape of the state so that certain areas of the state where reading success was higher would have different frameworks for this plan versus other sections of the state where readers were struggling, and in that case, I guess the word would

be more appropriately "standardized," and so that's the genesis of my question. I appreciate the answer.

Mr. Speaker, just a comment to finish my remarks. I -- as I said at the beginning, I can't think of a more important focus of our time and talent than the betterment of the process of education in Connecticut. And at the same time, I would allow that it is one of the most difficult things to manage because teaching is an art. Children come to the classroom with all kinds of uniqueness and situation and compromise and skill and talent and initiative and concern. There are just so many factors that go into being a successful teacher, but more especially, being a successful student, not to mention that that whole process is further delineated by the level at which that child is learning. And by "level," I mean the standardized level of his or her grade level, not their particular personal learning level. Yet, we must persevere. We need to do whatever we can. And the process of doing whatever we can needs to be one where we team build and where we build bridges, not walls, and where we include, as best we can, and encourage all the different players in the process from the Commissioner right on down to the pre-K

student and that includes their family.

This process is multifaceted. It is fraught with concern, fraught with problems, but even moderately successful, it can yield such a wonderful return. And we've had comments shared here in our discussions about how much it costs to educate a child versus how much it costs not to do that, and the expense is clearly multiple times more when a child -- when their education is unsuccessful.

So I applaud the work of this legislature. I am proud to be a member of the Education Committee, and I'm appreciative that at this very late juncture in our session, we have a bill. I wish there was more time to really drill down and look through it, but be that as it may, I am solidly in favor of the initiatives and the various establishments that this bill sets out, and I'll be voting in favor.

Thank you for the opportunity to make comments, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, sir.

Gentlewoman from Monroe, Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Chairs, the Co-Chairs, the Ranking Member, the professional groups who brought perspective to the table to collaborate on this document. I especially want to thank the Minority Caucus, their advocacy for their constituency. It's very important in this dialogue that we're having.

The education of the children of Connecticut I think is so important to all of us because we view ourselves as protectors, providers. And we all in this Chamber recognize the significant responsibility that we have. I believe that we're only as strong or as excellent as our weakest and most needy. And we all either will win or lose based on the efficacy of this bill and its intention. This bill has definitely gotten the attention of the stakeholders in our community.

Since becoming a legislator, I have learned some new code, and that code is that when you read legislation there are certain words in that legislation that make you go, hum. Words like, "may" instead of "shall." Words like "within available resources," which means maybe there are not resources. I see in many instances there is code in this bill.

So through you Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the good gentleman Chair of the Education Committee a couple of questions.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Please proceed.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, sir. You could just nod at me. Thank you.

If we know that literacy and language is key to academic achievement, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the good gentleman Chair of the Education Committee, can you tell me please, sir, why in many instances, with regards to the content area of reading, the language is soft or code in this legislation. And I would refer to line 103, lines 5533, 5568, just for your -- it's more a general question, sir. Those are examples. Is it because of intention, or is it being dictated by budgetary fiscal issues? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. If the gentlelady could please repeat the section she's referring to

that would be extremely helpful.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Happy to do that.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, in line 103, you see a reference to "may." In line 5533, there's also references to "may." 5568, there's a reference to "based on within available resources." And, I guess, for the purpose of the good gentleman to answer the question, it's just really -- I'm trying to get legislative intent. Through you, sir, is that soft language, is it a lack of intention -- I guess would be how I would frame it -- and have we not allocated appropriate fiscal support for this piece of legislation? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Through you, you know, different questions demand different answers. So looking first at the -- the later section of the bill and lines, I guess, 5566 and on, the Commissioner, you know, shall review and

evaluating school intensive reading intervention strategy for model components that may be used and replicated in other schools and school districts.

That's a "may" because if it were a "shall," it would be a mandate. It would cost money so it would be an unfunded mandate. I have heard time and again from folks in this chamber, particularly, from Representative Hovey's side of the aisle that unfunded mandates are a concern. We did not wish to create one here. So it's a "may," so that we have not created a massive unfunded mandate that would have led, I think, to major objections to the bill.

Turning to the other section that I have in hand, section 4, this is a pilot program. And we have provided funding in the budget for extension of this pilot from three schools that are currently participating to ten more. It says, the Commissioner "may" identify schools, because at the time of this drafting I think the budget was not necessarily complete. It wasn't evident how many schools we might be able to include. We also didn't want to imply that the Governor -- excuse me -- the Commissioner would be in -- in any way circumscribed in which schools to select. So there will be 10 schools chosen. They

will be schools that are willing participants in the pilot and there is money in the budget for same. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the achievement gap, through you, to the good gentleman, has there been an analysis of the strategic school's profile to tell us exactly how many students are implicated in the achievement disparity here in the state of Connecticut? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I -- I do believe that both the State Department of Education and various other groups in Connecticut have used school profiles and other available data to go ahead and analyze the number of children who are not reaching the levels of -- of skill in reading and mathematics that would be desired by our state standards. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And Mr. Speaker, along that same line, would the Commissioner's network and the priority schools and the interventions to improve, when they talk about "may be used" and "may be replicated," I'm wondering why, with so much energy in documentation of efficacy, there's not a stronger demand for generalization to all the schools with achievement deficits. And is it the good gentleman's perspective that that is because that would require a mandate that would then fiscally obligate us?

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I would look at this aspect of the bill through a different lens. The Commissioner's network is designed to help make sure that we turn around 25 of the state's most struggling schools. And we have provided both models and language and funding that will allow us to move

forward in that way. It's our hope that we will develop best practices that will be made available through various means to all school districts, which can then copy the best practices from the Commissioner's network and, hopefully, turn around schools on their own in the same way that the Commissioner is doing in the network. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, just for clarification, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the good gentleman, it would appear that in his communication with the Commissioner of Education that it is part of the intention of the Commissioner to develop a standardized format, so to speak, of the best practice instruction and then generalize it across the state. Would I be correct in saying that? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a fair

characterization.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know, this bill has had a whirlwind existence and as had several renditions, and the idea that we would make massive education reform in a short session, which is usually reverse -- reserved for budgetary purposes seems to have been an exercise in chaos and to not have included those most highly educated in the art of education and who are intimately involved in gathering their support all along seems to have been a little bit shortsighted and disrespectful.

But here we are today with this rendition of SB24 E CERT 458, that take steps towards improvement, positive change and good things, I think across the board, although I do not believe it is reforming.

So, through you, Mr. Speaker, I have one last question for the good gentleman.

Thank you, sir.

Through you, could the good gentleman please tell me, in looking at this bill -- and I've gone through

it -- where there is mandate relief for the higher performing districts in the state of Connecticut? That's a concept that we had -- had significant conversation about and if you could just indicate to me where I would find that in this bill, I'd appreciate it?

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I have to acknowledge that in my perusal of the bill I haven't found specific section with regard to that. But there is clearly a section that talks about recognizing outstanding schools and outstanding school districts, and it's my hope that along with such recognition, as we move forward, we will be able to offer reduction of red tape burdens. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And Mr. Speaker, I thank the good gentleman for his answers.

I wish this bill -- this piece of legislation all the best and all of the individuals who are going to be implementing it all the best. I think that it can be a great improvement for the state of Connecticut that we should all embrace, and I look forward to supporting it.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Thank you, madam.

Representative Carpino.

REP. CARPINO (32nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Through you, some very technical questions for legislative intent --

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Proceed.

REP. CARPINO (32nd):

-- to the Chairman.

I freely admit these are quite technical because I believe they're going to be very important to the legislative intent for what I hope is the timely rollout of this bill.

So, if the Chairman would indulge me, I'll start at chapter 1 -- I'm sorry -- section 1, dealing with the new slots. It's a question I've asked before, and

through you, Mr. Speaker, are these slots all going to be full time, and if so, why?

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. If I could ask my colleague to repeat the question, I'm not sure I quite caught it.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Carpino.

REP. CARPINO (32nd):

Thank you.

Section 1 talks about some of the new slots we're going to be instituting. We can start on line 6 with the first new slots of the 500. My question specifically is are these slots going to be full time or is there an opportunity for us to better serve double the number of students by allocating some of them to be part-time?

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that the language before us refers to full-time slots

but that a district could, in fact, take a full-time slot and turn it into two half-time slots if it found that was what was most effective. The cost of providing one full-time slot is the same as the cost of providing two half-time slots. There are families that would prefer half time to full time. So, it's my expectation that the guidelines coming forward from the State Department will allow for that sort of flexibility. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Carpino.

REP. CARPINO (32nd):

I thank -- and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm happy to hear that knowing that we had obviously want to serve as many children as we can, and that knowing how young these children are, I think that it may be too much for some students to put them from nothing to full time.

My next question is section 5, dealing with the reading assessments. Starting at line 27, I just want to confirm what I believe that this will be, once in place by the Department of Education, applied to all districts across the state? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. So, if I caught the line reference correctly, we're talking about a study to help us understand what the need might be for additional facilities to allow for us to move toward universal access to early childhood education. So it is the intention for that survey to cover the entirety of the state and for us to have a sense of where the needs may be. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Carpino.

REP. CARPINO (32nd):

Thank you.

And moving on to section 6, actually, a very simple question. Section 6 deals with certified employees taking practice versions of reading instruction exams. Starting at approximately 1 -- line 152. And while I'm a firm believer that reports are wonderful, I think that actually acting on results are better. So my question to the Chairman is what will be done with the results of these tests, other than them being published, will they be used for any purpose other than publishing them? Through you, Mr.

Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. As I read this section, it ensures that all the certified employees will be taking this reading instruction exam. That's not something that is currently required of them and that the results are reported to the Department of Education.

The reason for having the reporting to the Department of Education is so that the Department can formulate an appropriate response. So, for instance, if it turns out that all of the teachers who are holding these certificates currently have the skill sets they need to teach early literacy, then the Department will, I'm sure, be pleased, as will we all.

If, however, they find that there's a large percentage of people who are holding these certifications, yet, lack the skills needed to properly instruct in reading, I'm sure that the Department will be working on a plan, probably in conjunction with the General Assembly, to make sure that we improve our professional development so that,

indeed, all these teachers have the skills they need to teach early literacy. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Carpino.

REP. CARPINO (32nd):

Thank you.

And moving on to section 11, line 223, talks about the Commissioner of Education having the ability to provide with an -- available appropriation grants for technical assistance. If the Chairman could tell me if there have been any indications as to how those will be determined, winners, losers, metrics and criteria to determining who the winners of -- or I should say, the victors of those grants may be and how they will be determined. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. That has yet to be determined. This is something that happens commonly in the General Assembly that we lay out the general parameters of a -- of a competitive grant and the State Department of Education issues guidelines or a letter to all districts letting them know the -- the

weighting that will be given to various parts of the application, the timing, and so forth, so that there is a fair playing field and level playing field for all districts. That's how similar sections have been put into practice, previously, and that's what I would expect here. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Carpino.

REP. CARPINO (32nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And moving all the way to line 28, 29, having to do with the master's degree, a relatively simple question. I'm hoping that the good Chairman can just explain to me. These are the lines that hold that a master's degree in an appropriate subject matter area will relate to the teacher certification. And -- and my question is, hopefully, very succinct. At what point will the State Department of Education be making this list? Is this going to be something that is going to be determined on a case-by-case basis when a teacher applies for this, or is this something that the State Department of Education is going to put together a list so that, in advance, teachers will know what is applicable and what is not to their

appropriate discipline? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER GODFREY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure. The section that's being referred to is going to be implemented on or after July 1, 2016. So we have a number of years in which the Department can develop the framework for this.

This idea came from -- from teachers, frankly, who felt that a master's degree would be a more useful tool than simply 30 CEUs. So -- so the idea is -- is clear, the details will be fleshed out in the four years to come. Through you, Madam Speaker.

(Deputy Speaker Kirkley-Bey in the Chair.)

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Can you hear me? I'm sorry.

You have the floor, madam. Please proceed.

REP. CARPINO (32nd):

Thank you.

And I want to thank the good Chairman of Education. I, too, believe that that is a good

provision. It's just that in all fairness I believe that it's important for us to educate the administrators, the Department, and all of the professional educators in advance as to what's appropriate.

Ladies and gentlemen, like many of you, I have seen this bill and its many interations. This is the third time. And throughout the entire process, I have had the opportunity to speak with many of the stakeholders, the parents that I see at preschool each morning as I go with my own little one, the educators that I've met at seven o'clock the morning before school and Saturday during a rainy day, and -- and the many taxpayers who may not have a child in the school system but who are vested in the future of our state; and each and every time, as you might imagine, they all have divergent interests. And each time they ask me for my opinion, and I told them that first and foremost I would put my students first. And that throughout this process, I would give this bill the benefit of the doubt because I owed it to the students, not just the students of my district, but the students of my state. So I urge support for this bill, and I hope that all of my colleagues seriously

consider that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you.

Representative Kokoruda, you have the floor, ma'am.

REP. KOKORUDA ' (101st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Well, a lot of us last night were pretty excited when we heard an agreement was made -- or was reached. It was three months ago today that the Governor rolled out his Education Reform bill. And as we've heard -- we've watched -- we've seen and we've read many, many different -- different versions of it, and it's pretty amazing that we ended up where we are today.

It's unfortunate that so much of the conversation became about teacher evaluation. There's so many issues about education and our achievement gap, and I really do believe teachers are part of it, but just a part of it, and it seemed like the whole conversation was based on evaluation.

With all the campaign literature we received on this issue from all the stakeholders, we -- I'm so glad we're not a paperless society because it's been a

pretty incredible 90 days. There was one sentence that just said the goal of teacher evaluation should be to continuously improve and reform teaching so as to better educate our students. Very simple but I think we do accomplish that in this bill, and I think it's the right step to take.

The bill is a little more permissive than I would like in some areas. And as we've heard tonight, you know, we keep hearing about we don't want unfunded mandates, and I know our Chairman of Education said from this side of the aisle, but who we really hear about unfunded mandates from are from our taxpayers and from our -- our selectmen and from our mayors. And that's who we hear about unfunded mandates. But there are mandates in here that wouldn't cost any money that I would have like to have seen.

But there's a lot to like in this bill. And I do want to take this time to recognize the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus. You know, they pushed for several key aspects of education reform, and I want to thank them for intensifying this debate. And when it's -- the bill seem like, when it came to the Education Committee, so watered down and so many people were so disappointed, I really feel it was that

Caucus that got us back on track. I feel their handprint -- their fingerprints are all over the bill.

Also the common chart of accounts, I think, sections 15 and 16, I feel are very, very important parts of this reform. We heard testimony of school districts that had different accounting measures for different schools. We really can't decide and determine what proper funding is for a school district if we don't have a common chart of accounts.

And also, Madam Chair -- Madam Speaker, I do have a couple of questions for the Chairman of the Education Committee.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann, prepare yourself.

Representative Kokoruda, please proceed.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

Yes. Through you, Madam Speaker. In section 23 -- and I don't have the lines -- they talk about the school governance councils. May I ask the Chairman of the Education Committee, I know these exist now and that the boards of ed's have jurisdiction over the -- lowest performing schools and create -- can create these councils, but how has this bill change that?

Through you, Madam Chairman.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

Madam Speaker.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker -- Madam Speaker, sorry.

It's my understanding that this bill maintains the form and function of school governance councils as they're currently on the books but expands the number of schools that will have them. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

And I thank the Chairman of the Education for that answer.

Another question, through you, Madam Speaker, section 62, I'd like to ask about the -- are there any changes in this bill to the MBR, the minimum budget requirements, as they stand today? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. The minimum budget requirement is actually rewritten every year to reflect changed circumstances. That said, this MBR in this bill is pretty much parallel to the ones that we've had on the books for the past four years. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And my final question is, the section 13, the Chairman of Education spoke about the exemplary schools and it allows them to be recognized. We had spoken in our Education Committee about waivers for our highest performing schools to give them relief from, you know, data collection and other -- other issues so that they can spend more time on educating students and improving their curriculums.

Was any thought given to that and what was the determination not to include any of that in this bill? Through you, Madam Chairman -- Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. It's my understanding that those who were in discussions over this bill -- and there were many parties involved -- concluded that it was possible to reduce red tape. That it didn't need to go into the legislation. There's a task force being put together by the Governor that will include key people from the State Department of Education. Those things that they can do administratively, they will do. Those things that require legislation will be put before us in our next regular session. Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

And I thank the Chairman of Education for that answer.

I just want to say, I feel there is so many good parts of this bill, and I do want to point out, too, one, as we've all been talking about is the preschool options and creating new readiness programs. We heard testimony again and again how this is imperative in our state.

And the other part is section 89, and I know this

was championed by the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, but the intensive reading program and to improve student literacy, and it's a priority for that Caucus and it should be a priority for our state.

And we started this, as I said, February 8th. We heard it in the first Education meeting and we discussed it. And a lot of us have worked on it, gone to forums, sat through public hearings, worked with the different stakeholders trying to move this forward and urging the leadership to move this forward. So today I stand happy to support this bill, and I urge everyone else to do the same.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Wood, you have the floor, ma'am.

REP. WOOD (141st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I, also, have been following this debate from the very beginning in February when the Governor came out with his Education bill, along with Commissioner Pryor. And I do stand in support of this bill and I -- I think, certainly would like to thank Stefan Pryor, Commissioner Stefan Pryor, for his vision and his

energizing move forward on this and his fortitude because I know it was -- there were a lot of -- lot of controversial issues on this. Also thank Representative Fleischmann for leading this effort as well, and I thought Representative Giuliano articulated beautifully that it's -- we were all hoping it would be a boldly leap but it is certainly a good small step forward.

And I also think this is the most important bill we're going to do this session, to my mind, and I think to many of us. It is the civil rights issue of our time. It's educating every kid in this state and giving him or her the best possible start.

There are the three initiatives I like in particular, and I do have one question of the proponent of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Please proceed, ma'am.

REP. WOOD (141st):

Thank you.

Well, the question is after the three things I like so he has time, not time for dinner, though.

Anyway, the initiatives that I like in particular are the preschool slots for the kids because the

foundational experience for kids is fundamental to their success later on. I love that part of the bill.

I also like the Early Literacy program, the scientific -- the scientific-based research initiative. We're doing that in the district that I represent, and it's been very, very successful. It's a Yale/Haskins study, and it's a very solid program. And I think we'll serve all these kids quite well.

The last initiative that I like, in particular, in this bill is the increased funding for charter schools. The charter schools are serving an underserved districts so well and so solidly, and I like that increased funding is coming from the State and that there will also be increased funding from the different municipalities.

So my question to Representative Fleischmann is on the charter schools was there ever a debate about fully funding the charter schools? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. If I understand the question correctly, there was always support for

increased funding for charter schools and there was just a question of the level to which it would be increased. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Wood.

REP. WOOD (141st):

Yes. But right now the charter schools are funded at about 70 percent, and even the increase over the next three years doesn't fully fund them. And I just wondered if there was fully -- if it was ever discussed to fully fund the charter schools, more or less, not quite money follows the child, but along those lines? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. I -- I really can't accept the basic premise of my good colleague's question. When you talk about fully funding a child's education, we have widely varying costs per pupil in this state. So there are districts that educate children for around $9,000; there are districts that spend around $17,000. There's a huge -- huge sort of array of cost depending on how a district runs its

programs and how it allocates its resources. It's one of the reasons that we're looking to have a chart of accounts to have greater transparency and clarity on how districts are spending their money.

Charter schools, when advocates came before this assembly in the mid nineties while I was here, they made it very clear that they could do more for less. Let me repeat that. Every advocate for charter schools who came before us said they could do more for less. So that implies that the average per pupil expenditure in the state of Connecticut is more than the charter school would need.

We are currently funding charter schools at $9400 per pupil. The bill before us would increase that figure to $10,500 per pupil in the coming year and further beyond that. I think most parties to this -- to this bill agreed that that represents a major increase and one that will allow charter schools to have a lot more resources to do the things they do. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Wood.

REP. WOOD (141st):

Thank you. I appreciate the good

Representative's response.

However, the tech schools, vo-tech schools, the technical schools are fully funded, and I think the charter schools are fully aware and have put forward what it costs per student. And I think if that has not been debated or discussed, I think that should be something that should be discussed going forward because the charter schools have absolutely, without question and across the board, both parties, city, town, across this state, have demonstrated absolutely a capability to educate all these kids.

So I'm not sure I have a question anymore, but I -- I think that that is something that I would like this body to examine going forward.

Thank you. And again, I stand --

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

-- in support of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Kupchick, you have the floor.

REP. KUPCHICK (132nd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I do not have any questions. I've spent -- since about 2:30 this morning, when we were first given the -- the language for the new Education Reform bill for Connecticut, I have tried very hard to read every single word in it. I did that because I am a member of the Education Committee. You would think that a member of the Education Committee would have actually had a chance to see the language less -- well, more than 24 hours before the bill actually came out on the House floor. But that sadly was not the case. And even though I am a freshman legislator, I have been in elected office in my community, and I've been in the minority and I've been in the majority and never have I ever been involved in a situation where legislation wasn't shared with either side, where people didn't work together to produce something that was for all the residents in their communities.

I like a lot of this legislation. I spent a lot of time since we first had our first two days of public hearings meeting with the teachers in my district, not once, not twice, not three times. I would say at least ten different times, met with teachers from all over the town of Fairfield, and I

listened to them. I shared e-mails with them, and I spoke with them on the phone. I shared some of my thoughts and their concerns with the Chairman -- the Chairmen of the Education Committee, but again, sadly, we still hadn't seen an Education bill.

Most of what I'm reading here, I do like. I do like that the most controversial parts of the bill have been put into pilot programs so we can, at least, study them and have an opportunity to see how they work.

Education is a very important issue to me. It's what propelled me into public service. Standing up for children who didn't have a voice in a lower income area in my town because I felt it was vitally important that someone stand up for them and that very act was what propelled me into public service. Education of children is so important to me that I've been involved because of it.

So I am, again, disappointed that we couldn't all -- those of us, especially on the Education Committee, couldn't be more involved with this bill. And I do hope that, in the future, major legislation that affects everyone in the state isn't brought out in the dark of night, with little time for people to have a

real look at it, not just the legislators that pass the bill, but the public who is going to have to now live by the law. They should have the right to at least have a time to read it and to digest it and to comment on it.

And I don't only feel this way about this bill but I felt this way last night about the budget. This is not how we pass legislation. This is not the way Connecticut residents expect us to represent them.

But I do support this bill because, again, I think it is vitally important that everyone in this state care about those young people who aren't doing well, because even if they don't live in our communities, they are our children. They are our children. They are Connecticut's children and because of that, I will support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Srinivasan, you have the floor -- not here.

Representative Kiner.

REP. KINER (59th):

Close.

Thank you, Madam Chair -- or Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, a few questions, through you, to the Chairman of the Education Committee.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Please proceed, Representative Kiner.

REP. KINER (59th):

It's Kiner. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Through you, Madam Speaker, to the good Chairman. In section 20 of the bill, referring to turnaround school plans, starting at the end of line 1341, it reads, the local or regional Board of Education for a school in which such turnaround plan is to be implemented in the exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees -- that's the important part, certified employees -- chosen pursuant to subsection 10-153b of the General Statutes, shall negotiate with respect to salaries, hours and other conditions of employment of such turnaround plan.

For the purpose of legislative intent, and again, through you, Madam Speaker, to the Chairman, will noncertified employees of the school, be they paraprofessionals, custodians, cafeteria workers, nurses, clerical staff, who are covered now by a collective bargaining agreement remain public

employees in -- under their existing collective bargaining agreement. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, it's my understanding of the common law of the State of Connecticut that a collective bargaining agreement that is in place remains enforced; that under both our federal and state constitutions, people have a right to contract and that there would be no right created here for abrogation of existing contracts. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Kiner.

REP. KINER (59th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thank you to the Chair for that answer.

And I believe that this question is going to be along the same lines and probably will have a similar answer.

Through you, on line 647, which is section 18, which is dealing with the State Board of Education when it intervenes with schools to implement a plan.

It says, if a directive of the State Board of Education pursuant to subparagraph (C), (D), (E), (G) or (L) of subdivision (2), of this subsection or directive to implement a plan pursuant to subparagraph (H) of said subsection -- of subsection (2) affects working conditions, such directives shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of sections 10-153a to 10-153n, inclusive.

Now, those, Madam Speaker, are the Teacher Negotiations Act, so it's saying if these directives to be carried out, they're going to be carried out in accordance with the Teacher Negotiation Act.

For the purpose of legislative intent, would the same directive hold true to again noncertified employees who are covered by a collective bargaining agreement?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, through you, it's my understanding of federal, constitutional law, state law and common law that an existing contract cannot be abrogated. So in

-- in this instance, if someone is covered under a contract and the circumstances change, either their -- their current contract remains in force, unless they agree to reopen it to go ahead to go ahead and -- and accommodate changing circumstances. But absent their agreement to reopen a contract, I believe it remains enforce under our system of law. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Kiner.

REP. KINER (59th):

Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I thank the Chairman for his answers. I don't have any more questions for him.

I do stand in strong support of this legislation. As a member of the Education Committee, I would like to thank both my chairs, Representative Fleischmann and Senator Stillman. The leadership of both chambers, Democrat, Republican and the Governor's Office for all their work on this bill and -- and waiting until they got it right in order to bring it out.

So again, thank you. I stand in support.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, sir.

Representative Smith, you have the floor, sir.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good evening to you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Good evening, sir.

REP. SMITH (108th):

You know, I listened to a lot of the dialogue tonight and many of the members who have spoken so far have indicated that they've lived with this bill for three months and have been too many hearings and forums and all kinds of good stuff, and I on the other hand have not had the luxury, until this morning, to take a look at this bill. And I'm noticing that it's 5,730 pages -- well, lines, pages, whatever it's a lot. So I figured we'd start on page -- line 1 and go through it.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative -- Representative Fleischman, prepare yourself.

Representative Smith, please proceed.

REP. SMITH (108th):

I'm just kidding. I wouldn't do that to the good -- good chairman over there. He's been very diligent,

I figured a little levity in the -- this time of the night, at this hour of the legislature here. Session's winding down so I -- I wouldn't do that.

I'm actually going to use one of the cheat sheets, which is probably not a good thing to do with the education bill, but it's the OLR report and it had some good information in there. And it looks like back in 2008, that the State of Connecticut did a -- a space and facility study to determine the need or what is needed to provide early childhood education to three- and four-year-olds.

And I'm wondering if the Chairman is familiar with that study? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, no, I am not familiar with the details of that study.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Okay. So that's -- alleviates a lot of those questions.

I noticed we're going to pay approximately $80,000 for the study in this bill; is that accurate?

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, yes. I believe that's what's allocated in this bill.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And does the Chairman know whether we're -- going- going to use the study from 2008 and compare the data from that study with the new study here we're going to do as part of this bill? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, it -- as I understand it, the study that was done a few years ago only covered priority school districts, which represent a small minority of the total population of Connecticut. So -- or at least a small minority of our districts.

So this study will go beyond that study in looking at the entire spectrum of districts across the state of Connecticut and will, of course, take into account data that was collected then. Through you,

Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And -- and is it the intent of the -- this bill that that study once it's completed -- I'm sure the date and when -- when it's due by -- does that come back to the Education Committee or who -- or is that the State Education Commission Department? Who takes a look at that and evaluates that and analyzes the data to implement or not implement what they found? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, it's a study, it doesn't require implementation, but it does provide information that's valuable for understanding the degree to which we have capacity to provide more preschool education to more children in Connecticut.

So it's my expectation that both the State Department of Education and the Education Committee will be looking at the results of that report. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Thank you.

And in terms of the early illiteracy pilot study, had the school districts been identified as to which studies will be -- which districts will perform the -- the study? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, yes and no.

There are three schools that are currently engaged in the study of the new assessment, and those have been selected and they have been very pleased with how helpful and how much more accurate and edifying the new assessment is compared to the -- the one that's been in use for decades.

The new schools that will participate in the expansion of the pilot have yet to be selected. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And I'm just wondering and, you know, I feel a little awkward because the good Chairman is trying to get his dinner and he hasn't had a chance to do so. So maybe I'll just speak a little bit and let him get a couple bites in.

And what I'm wondering is in terms of the districts that have been identified who they might be. And, you know, those who have not yet been considered, been considered, which -- what are the criterions in which are used to determine, whether it's this city versus this town, or I'm sure there are certain factors that go a long with that. So eventually I'll be looking for the answers to those questions as to what districts have been identified now? What are the criterion for those districts that will be picked in the future and how many in total, actually, will there be and, of course, what the overall cost to the State of Connecticut for these studies are? And hopefully, I gave the Chairman a little time to digest. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker.

I thank my colleague for his consideration. I'm used to chewing under pressure.

When it comes to his questions, first of all these are pilots in schools not districts, and there are three schools that have been participating and that have been thrilled with the finer grained results that they get from the new assessment. The old assessment really didn't give the kind of detailed information on a child's reading level the new assessments can provide.

With regard to expansion of the pilot, there is money in the budget. It was enacted last night to allow ten more schools to participate. I believe that the Commissioner will be looking to identify schools that demonstrate a particular need for this assessment; in other words, schools where you don't necessarily see the type of reading results that you'd like to see and a finer grained reading assessment could be helpful. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And -- and the three schools that have been chosen already. Can you identify those for us?

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Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, offhand, I cannot.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And there was a -- a notation that the -- there had been some type of studies in the past, whether they were pilots or not, I'm not sure, and that the data from those studies haven't yet -- they were insufficient, according to the Chairman to be utilized in terms, of what we're trying to do here. But I'm wondering if any of the pilots that have been done in the past gave us any indications of how we should proceed going forward? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, I think that an answer to a different colleague on a different set of questions might have been conflated with this issue.

So, there has previously been a space study of

how -- how many seats are available for preschoolers in priority school districts, and we're looking to do a broader study of the availability of space for preschool across Connecticut that was the area that was discussed previously.

With regard to the reading pilot, it's only had one year so far to roll out and it's been tremendously successful. Each of the three participating schools loves the new assessment and has said it's light years ahead of the assessment that's under use now. And we have gotten indications from the State Department of Education that they have -- they have little doubt there will be more than ten schools happy to participate in expansion of this pilot. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And thank you for that answer. It does help clarify the questions I had in that regard.

I was looking over section 5 and it came to -- it seems to me that that section requires the State Department of Education to develop or approve reading assessments that districts must use to identify K

through three students who are reading deficient. And if I'm wrong in that interpretation -- I'll ask the Chairman to let me know -- but assuming I'm correct, I'm wondering if we have those types of assessments already and whether we have looked at those to implement the data that we have already obtained? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, the type of reading assessments contemplated in section 5 are the very type of assessments that are being piloted under the previous sections we were just discussion -- we were just discussing. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And I'm wondering because the -- the word "mandate" has been bantered about a little bit tonight and once these assessments are determined, will that be a -- a mandate on the school district to -- to use those as part of their curriculum? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, no.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Thank you for that answer.

I was looking at section 6, and it seems to me it requires teachers K through three to take a practice reading instruction exam -- which I may need, too -- which is then sent out to the State Department of Education. And I'm wondering what the purpose of that exam is? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, the State already has a reading instruction exam that is required of students who are graduating from teaching preparatory programs or from graduate prep programs for teaching. And those assessments cover the five key areas of awareness that a teacher and a student must have to fully gain literacy. Those exams have been extremely

helpful in improving instruction in our undergraduate and graduate programs for education for elementary school teachers. They haven't been applied to current teachers, teachers who are in a classrooms, who got to class and -- and to teach before these exams were put in place as -- as part of our certification requirements.

So this section helps ensure that we're going to see for our current teaching workforce how well prepared they are to use the latest evidence-based approaches to the teaching of reading. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And again, thank you for the -- the answer on that.

So, it seems to me that the -- the data is then acquired and reviewed by the State Department of Education and analyzed. And based on that analysis, it is then used to help improve our teachers in their ability to teach our children. So I'm -- I hope I'm correct in that assessment and, if so, that sounds like it's working well and would continue to be a

benefit to us here in the State of Connecticut.

The concern I have when I read over the language and, hopefully, it's not a real concern. Is that whether or not these exams that teachers do, in fact, take, whether it can be used against them in any way, in terms of obtaining tenure, keeping tenure, or in the new changes of the reforms that are a part of this bill? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, if I could ask my good colleague to repeat the question, I'm not sure I --

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith, will you, please restate the question?

REP. SMITH (108th):

Sure.

I was wondering if these exams that are taken by the teachers can be used against them in any way, in terms of tenure or any other evaluations? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, no. I believe that they're intended so to get a sense of where teachers' instructional capabilities lie. And if there's a possibility for improvement, to provide appropriate professional development opportunities. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And are these exams taken annually or -- or no? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, the measure before us does not contemplate requiring teachers to take these exams annually. I -- it doesn't seem to me that that would make sense on policy grounds. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

One of the sections -- and I think it's section

9, talks about requiring physical education for 20 minutes, I believe, it was each day; is -- is that correct? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, section 9, of the bill makes it clear that a child who is in grade kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 shall have a minimum of 20 minutes of exercise time made available to them. It doesn't say an uninterrupted period of 20 minutes but it does make that clear that at least 20 minutes in total during the school day should be made available to them. And this reflects the fact that there've been many studies done showing that if you give small children enough time for physical activity, it actually improves their -- their academic results. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Yes. I'm happy to hear that. I think that's a -- a good step in the right direction. I do believe young children that age do, in fact, need to let out

some steam. I guess the only concern I have would be that if it's not a -- a straight 20-minute period, how -- how do we work in the 20 minutes per day? I mean, is it a 10-minute recess or a 10-minute break? I mean, typically, as I recall, you would have a full period of gym or a full period of some type of recreation throughout the day. And if this is just going to be worked into the day with a few minutes here or a few minutes there, I'm not sure if that would beneficial and maybe the Chairman can help me with that. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, we leave the decision as to how to work those 20 minutes into the school day entirely a matter of local control. If we had said, you shall make available 20 minutes as a distinct period that would have been considered a mandate that would have had potential costs for districts that have scheduling systems that don't easily accommodate that. By doing it this way, we allow districts that already have a half an hour recess for all children to keep doing what they're doing. Districts that have cut

back on time for physical activity to create two 10-minute periods, if that's what they need. But in short, we're allowing flexibility so that we are not created any sort of unintended costly local mandate. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And again, that's much appreciated because there -- this mandate has been bantered about throughout the evening many times. And it's good to hear that we're stepping away from the mandates and letting the school districts create their own curriculum and -- and create their own time frames in which to teach the students and work whatever methods that they think are best into the daily subject areas.

I was looking at section 12, and it's I believe it's the open choice section, and I was wondering if the chairman could explain what that is and -- and what it does. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, as I explained to one

of our other colleagues just a few minutes ago, that section was proposed to us by the State Department of Education in order to optimize the number of children participating in the Open Choice Program and maximize our chances of meeting the goals that we have committed to meeting under this Sheff versus O'Neill agreement. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

So I was trying to play it out in my mind if -- if -- and I think it applies to students in districts that have 4,000 or more. And so if you live in one of the other areas and you wanted to attend this -- this other school, you had the right, pursuant to this bill, to do that; is that correct? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And does the Chairman know how many school districts that we have in Connecticut that 4,000 student's would apply? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, not offhand.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Looking at section 13, and -- and I apologize to the Chairman if he's answered this question. I was trying to -- I pretty much have stayed in the chamber but I wasn't able to hear every answer.

It talks about exemplary schools being recognized and in what way are they recognized? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, that question was explicitly asked before, and as I said before, we expect that the State Department of Education would draw attention to these schools, perhaps, giving them

various honors and prizes. And more importantly, draw attention to their best practices through publication of those best practices through their website and/or through their written publications. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And I apologize to the gentleman for asking the same question. It's inevitably going to happen, I guess, but I try not to if I can avoid it.

I was looking at sections 15 and 16, which talk about the notice -- which talks about the implementation and the use of uniform systems of accounting and chart of accounts. I'm wondering if we have any systems, if the Chairman is aware of any districts in which the schools are already applying that in Connecticut right now? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that the City of Hartford has taken an approach to

providing increased transparency and greater clarity about how dollars are being spent, how many dollars are going to direct classroom instruction, how to administration, how many to materials.

I'm sure that there are some other districts that are so doing. The purpose of this section is to try and have a standard approach for all districts in Connecticut. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And I -- and I appreciate the answer, and I appreciate the -- the concept of having a standard approach. It certainly makes a lot of sense. We're all in this state together. We're all in this education reform together. And if we can have one system, in which all the school districts are performing the same duties and tasks in accounting, it certainly is going to be helpful in terms of the evaluations that are part of the reforms in the studies going forth.

I'm wondering, though, whether this requirement, as I read it, is now a new mandate for the towns? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, given the fact that we have provided State funding for this development of this chart of accounts and are not contemplating a rollout without additional State funding, it seems to me the answer to that question is no.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

So if I understand you correctly, with the State funding available or appropriated for this education bill, there should be no town, then, that would have to reach into its own budget to pay for this additional accounting change? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, that's my best understanding of the bill, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Section 17, talks about a study of small district issues, which is one of the areas that I'm certainly concerned with because of the districts that I, in fact, represent. How does one qualify or how does one town qualify to be classified as a small district? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, in the original bill, which had this section as a -- as something that would roll forward. And in the current bill, which has it as a simple study, a small district is defined clearly as a district with fewer than 1,000 students. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And the study for the small districts, what is the -- what is the goal of that study, or what are we looking to get out of it? And how are we going to apply it? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. The goal is to find whether there are incentives and/or disincentives that can lead to greater efficiencies and better educational results for small districts. And it's the expectation is that report of this group will come back to the General Assembly for us to decide as policymakers what we wish to do with it? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

You know, as I was skimming through the language -- and I could have it wrong so -- but it seemed like it was penalizing those small towns that decided to spend more money than the average cost per student on a statewide basis. So it's almost a financial disincentive to do that. And I'm wondering what the rationale is behind that? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure. That's

why this issue is being studied.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Well, I'm not sure why it's being studied. I'm trying to find out why it's being studied. So if the State is saying to the town, you cannot spend more money than what we spend on a statewide basis. There has to be a reason for that, and I'm just wondering what the reason is? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. So, this bill comes before us because Governor Malloy in his administration proposed a sweeping educational reform package. Part of that package involved incentive and disincentives for small districts to explore greater mutual cooperation.

There were complaints from representatives, like my good colleague Representative Smith, about the potential impact of the disincentives. So as a gesture of cooperation with the administration and understanding of the circumstances faced by small

districts, we've decided to study the issue so that we might have more information to consider next session. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And I appreciate that answer but there must be some reason -- there must have been some reason why the State thought it was a bad thing for smaller towns to spend more money on a per pupil basis than the statewide average.

And that's really the answer I'm looking for. What is the reason? Is it a bad thing? Is it not a bad thing? There must have been some thought that you know what, this is not a good idea that every small town should spend the same amount as every other town even though they may have more money to spend on per pupil expenditure.

So I just thought there has to be some type of rationale, and I didn't see it anywhere in the -- in the notes that I looked over. I'm sure the Chairman, being familiar with the Education Bill and the whole process here, might have an answer on that so I was hoping to garner that tonight. Through you, Madam

Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I'm not a mind reader. I really don't know what was behind the original proposal that was put before this General Assembly in February in this area. My guess is, my best speculation is that there was a belief that there were potential dollar savings and educational improvements that could be achieved in this area.

You know, with regard to -- to motives of others, I tend to follow the rule that we try to follow in this chamber, which is not to question other -- other's motives but to assume that they are always good motives intended for the best public interest. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Well, I'm certainly not asking the gentleman to read minds, and I'm not trying to test motives. What I'm trying to find out is was there any public

testimony; was there any type of documentation provided to the Education -- Education Committee in which, it was discussed whether or not this was a good idea or a bad idea to have the smaller towns spend less money than they might otherwise choose?

So I'm wondering, was there any information provided to the Chairman or the Education Committee? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Do you care to answer, Representative Fleischmann?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, I suppose so. There were those who testified before the Education Committee in staunch opposition to this proposal because they believed it unfairly penalized small districts and there were some who testified in support because they believed that there were greater efficiencies that could be accomplished by interdistrict cooperation. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Well, we took a long time to get there but we got the answer, and I appreciate the gentleman for that answer.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Was there a question there, sir?

REP. SMITH (108th):

Madam, I do if I could just have a moment to look at my notes.

I'm wondering whether or not -- or the Chairman knows how many towns currently fall into the small district category? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, I do not.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

I was looking down now to sections 29 to 31, which is the section dealing with charter schools. And again, this is all new area to me, so I'm -- I maybe -- I may have misread the information -- but if a town has a charter school now, does the State reimburse the town for the cost per student? Through

you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, under current law, dollars go straight from the State to charter school operators. Under the bill that is now before us, funds would go to local education authority, which would then pass the dollars straight along to the charter management organization. Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Thank you.

And -- and is that a dollar-for-dollar reimbursement? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, I'm not exactly sure what was meant by that question, but the best answer I can give is this, under current statute were providing $9,400 per pupil for every student attending a charter

school. If this bill becomes law in conjunction with the budget that we enacted last night, the figure will move up to $10,500 per pupil in the next fiscal year. Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Yeah. The -- the intent of my question was, in other words, if -- and I'll just use random numbers -- if it costs $10,500 for a student to attend a charter school, does the State reimburse the full 10,500 or is it just ten, five and if it costs a little bit more, the town makes up the difference? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, the State provides the funding that it provides per pupil for all charter school operators, period.

If a charter school operator expends or decides that it wishes to expend more than is provided on a per pupil basis by the state, that charter operator has to figure out other ways to raise funds. Whether

it's through some kind of cooperative arrangement with the district or fundraising or connections with charitable foundations. But there is no requirement under current law, no requirement under this bill, that the local education authority would automatically provide any additional funding to charter schools. Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

I thank the gentleman for his answer.

And I thank you, Madam Speaker.

And if a town wanted to start a new charter school -- and I -- I notice there were some provisions in there that limited the areas of the towns in which the charter school could be placed -- and I thought I saw some provisions in the OLR Report, which indicated that if a charter school was, in fact, placed in a certain district per the requirements of the bill as -- as before us tonight, that there would be a $500,000 cost that the town would have to pay. And it didn't sound right to me and it doesn't seem right. So maybe I -- I read it wrong, but I'm wondering if the Chairman is aware of that? Through you, Madam

Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. I do believe my good colleague may have misread that section of the bill.

The funding that is being discussed is for the start up of a local charter. We have a local charter statute that has not been used. And among other things, this bill seeks to get that section statute used. And so the State would provide $500,000 for the start up of a local charter, in addition to a $3,000 per pupil level of support. Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I was hoping I was wrong in my analysis and really I think it might be a typo in that OLR Report, but it made more sense that the State would provide the money as it had for the other charter schools. So I'm happy that the Chairman was able to clarify that for me.

Having not -- having not had a chance to read all

the language of the bill, and I'm sure some of this was discussed already about the evaluations, but that was one of the main concerns that I received from the various teachers and employees of the various districts that I represent.

And one of the concerns by the teachers that I talked to was that there'd be an evaluation of the evaluators. And it seems to be that that's what part of this reform, which I'm happy to see. What I don't know, however, is who is it that evaluates the evaluator? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. If a principal is an evaluator, I believe that they are in turn evaluated by their superintendent. Typically, it's someone who you report to who serves as your evaluator. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

I assume that would also fall down the lines, so if there's a vice principal, it would probably be

evaluated by a principal; and teachers are evaluated by -- are they evaluated by teachers or are they evaluated by principals? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. It is, typically, vice principals or principals who are given the task of evaluating teachers.

However, the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, which has created a new rubric for teacher evaluation, has included a certain percentage of evaluation. They can be peer evaluation. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Yeah. And that's another good part of this bill that I'm happy to hear about because I think that is important to have peer evaluations, as well. I think we can all learn from each other, whether whatever profession we may be in. So I'm glad to hear that's part of the standards that are being developed.

And I assume, also, that there's standard being

developed for the evaluators who are evaluating, say, the superintendent evaluating the principal or the principal evaluating the vice principal. I assume there are being rubrics or standards being created part of this reform bill; is that accurate? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, under law that we have previously enacted, the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council was responsible for creating a framework, not only for evaluation of teachers, but evaluation of administrators, and indeed, they have already finalized a basic framework for the evaluation of administrators. It's quite similar to the one they developed for evaluation of teachers and now the remaining task before that council is to sort of flesh out these two evaluation processes: one for teachers and the other for administrators but both parallel. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And thank you.

And that's kind of what we heard, too, when I was speaking to the teachers along with the administrators as well, is that they -- there was a framework in place for these evaluations and, in fact, it just needed to have some of the details put in which I believe will be part of this reform bill with some new studies in creating the rubric for how we go forward as a state, to not only to make our teachers better, our principals better, our administrators better, which ultimately gives us a better student, which is obviously what this is all about.

I'm wondering if there's anything in the bill involving the parental evaluation or a parental involvement in the evaluation? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, which already exists and is already working, has created a framework that allows a district to include parental opinions and surveys as part of its evaluation framework if it sees

fit. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

And I thank the Chairman for that answer.

And just a few more questions if I may, Madam Speaker.

One of the other concerns that the teachers did have, who I spoke to was, that they have different indicators for different disciplines. And I suspect -- and I just wanted to be sure, as part of the study going forward that those types of indicators and disciplines will be looked at to make sure that we're comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges. As opposed to, you know, comparing apples to oranges; is -- is that accurate? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, I -- I apologize to my good colleague, but I was distracted and would ask that he please repeat the question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith, will you please repeat your

question?

REP. SMITH (108th):

Yes, Madam Speaker.

I just want to make sure that part of the study that's being done that the -- they will be looking at different indicators for different disciplines so that we're comparing apples to apples and oranges to oranges. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, yes. So if someone teaches reading, you know, the assessments that are used to will relate to reading. If someone teaches mathematics, they will be a math assessment; science, science assessments. Someone who's teaching outside of one of those obvious disciplines, someone who's a librarian, will probably be working with their direct supervisor to develop appropriate measures of student academic progress that would be appropriate to their role as a librarian. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (108th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And it's clear to me and I hope it's clear to the Chamber, I mean, there's nothing that could be clearer that the Chairman is well versed in the -- in what we're talking about here tonight with this education reform. He has done a fantastic job in making sure that the bill that was presented to us tonight was something that we can take a step forward, as a state, and really help improve our educational system.

So I -- I admire his effort. I thank him for his efforts. I'd like to thank our Ranking Member, as well.

This is by far -- as I think one of my colleagues said -- one of the most important bills we'll discuss this particular session and it's great to know that so much time, hard work, and effort has been put into it to give us a step for the future to allow Connecticut to step out from underneath and get on top of the pile where we once were.

And congratulations to the Chairman, and I look forward to many more improvements on the road to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Speaker Donovan in the Chair.)

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Mr. Speaker, how nice to see you joined up there in the sea of khaki shirts --

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

We brought some reinforcements, Representative.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

As it should be, and they all look to be school age, how interesting, Mr. Speaker.

And welcome to the Boy Scouts.

Mr. Speaker, I have been studying this version that we have received of the bill, and I have been very, very impressed with a lot of the details that have been worked out.

In looking at school reform, we have passed, I think, touching on school reform through as a matter of fact this particular Chairman for the last 20 years. Certainly, we worked on Sheff versus O'Neill. We had Horton versus Meskill before that. And we spent a lot of time coming up with ideas for early childhood education, and certainly, we have looked at the mandates of what students should be studying.

And as the cast of characters changes in the chamber, it's always a lovely to see you, Mr. Speaker.

(Deputy Speaker Aresimowicz in the Chair.)

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Thank you very much, madam.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

So we're looking at in this particular bill some things that I'm not too sure of and I was trying to give the Chairman a moment to sit down, but I do have a couple of questions.

Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Please proceed. madam.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

In section 2, the early childhood education facility study has a whopping $80,000 in it to update a study that was just done in 2008. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

Could you please explain what improved version this is going to be? What will be included for this, I think significant portion of money? Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

May I say, it's nice to see you up there and to hear your -- your ringing voice.

In terms of that question, it has already been asked and answered in this chamber. The study that was done previously was only of priority school districts, which represent less than 10 percent of the school districts in the state of Connecticut.

This study will attempt to cover all school districts in the state of Connecticut given, you know the over half million children we serve and the -- the thousands of children who are toddlers and preschool age. This price tag is not considered exorbitant by our Office of Fiscal Analysis or our Appropriations Committee.

And what the -- what it will allow us to do is to have a full statewide picture of how many seats are currently available to children for preschool and how many more facilities we may need to build if we want to make sure that every child has a preschool opportunity. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Would it be an expectation then that this would be a study that the state department would be able to then maintain, keep up with, they will then have the data. Will they be managing those numbers so that in three years they can -- they will know how many seats are then available, where we'd be able to go from there because I -- it is my great hope and my great belief that the State of Connecticut will continue to look at early -- early childhood education as a major focus in our -- in our efforts to prioritize school learning advancements.

So would you expect, Mr. Chairman, through you, Mr. Speaker, that the state department would keep up with this once this study is done? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

I appreciate that answer.

In section 6, the teacher reading exam, Mr. -- Mr. Speaker, if the good Chairman would take a look at that. I was a little confused. I looked at the summary. I looked at the bill, and it discusses in the summary that the bill requires all certified teachers, i.e., teachers and administrators, who work in the kindergarten through third grade to take the practice versions of the SBE approved reading instruction exam.

Does that mean that no one will be grandfathered? That it will be an expectation that everyone who works would be expected, all certified employees, would be expected to take this exam? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes. That's that is how I read this section.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

So, through you, Mr. Speaker. We would expect

that also the gym teacher and the librarian, which I wouldn't imagine there be a problem there but they don't teach reading -- the school nurse. They are all certified employees. Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, a school nurse is not a holder of an initial, provisional or professional educator certificate, unless she also happens to be a teacher. These are folks who are in the -- in the education profession who would be taking this test. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

So it would be also the gym teacher, the librarian, say, a paraprofessional that has a certification and is acting as a para for a special needs student? Through you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I believe the language,

which is pretty clear on its face that any certified employee holding an initial, provisional, or professional educator certificate with an early childhood nursery through grade three or an elementary endorsement and employed in a position, kindergarten to grade three, would have to take this exam.

And also, observe that having spent a fair amount of time in elementary schools, teachers in various areas, including libraries and -- and gymnasia, have responsibilities that include helping kids read. Through you, Madam Speaker.

(Deputy Speaker Kirkley-Bey in the Chair.)

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

I thank the gentleman for his -- his clarification on that because I think that's legislative intent, Madam Speaker.

If I understand what he's saying then I would expect that, through the good Chairman, that the test will be in our primary language of English and that it would be expected that all teachers would take the

test, no matter even if they were a reading teacher, it would be expected that they would also have to take this test. No one is grandfathered. And if it's English is a second language, all those teachers, they would all be expected to take this reading exam.

And I thank the gentleman for his answer.

I don't think it could hurt, ladies and gentlemen. I really don't. I think as the good Chairman described even someone who teaches gym often teaches something else. They often will be the teacher of health. They may also have other expectations. They may have to substitute for another teacher for a couple of hours, say, a first grade teacher has to be out on a PPT or something like that, they may fill in on their -- on their break and have to actually teach reading, so I think that is an excellent idea.

But a follow-up question, through you, Madam Speaker.

Is there a penalty if someone does not pass that reading exam or what is the expectation if they do not pass it? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, as discussed with the previous colleague, there would be no consequence for the teacher. But the State Department of Education would gain valuable insight into the level of preparedness we have in our current teaching workforce to make sure that children from preschool through grade three are taught by professionals who have the skill sets needed to promote literacy. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Madam Speaker and through you, would the -- would the results then be published for the school district so that they could, perhaps, tout how many of their teachers were successful, or we would see which districts needed, perhaps, some additional professional development money to be able to enhance their reading expertise? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. Lines 156 through 158 of the bill specified that each local and regional

board of education shall annually report results of such practice exam to the Department of Education.

It's silent on the question of any additional use of the data. I think it would be a local decision as to whether the results of these reading exams were published more widely. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In the case that this expectation of someone's professional development, would the results go in someone's personnel file, Mr. Chairman? Through you, Madam Speaker.

So, therefore, it would not be FOI-able, so one could not obtain the particular results because it is considered personnel information? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. The -- the legislation before us is silent on that question. It seems to me for purposes of legislative intent that

the teacher's score on this sort of exam would be the type of information that would likely be placed in a teacher's personnel file, since it's an indicator of their professional progress. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I appreciate his thoughts on that and the clarification as we're looking towards legislative intent.

I'm sure -- I have a suspicion, Madam Speaker, that once these tests are taken, there is not only going to be an interest from the educational community as to how well these teachers do on reading exam on the practice exam, but I think there's going to be an interest amongst the parents, amongst the PTA, the PTOs, because they're going to want to know what -- at what level are their teachers. Are -- that they have their children in front of every single day. You know, I think there's an interest in every -- by every parent to have their child's school be successful and to be one of the top in the -- the area. Of course,

school districts, I have found, also, want to be extremely proud of each and every school within the district.

If I could have the Chairman's thoughts, I listened before when Representative Smith was asking, I apologize I've been in and out of the chamber because of other bills that are coming before us, and I heard some of Representative Smith's questions and it was regarding the state grants to charter schools.

Currently, the state grants of charter schools have been paid directly to charter schools. Now, we are adding another layer of administration because we're going to send the money to the school districts and then the school districts are going to send the money to the charter schools.

You know, my concern in this adding one more layer is -- is there a time certain in which the money must go to the charter school? Is it as soon as it is received? Is the turnaround time expected to be immediate? I know that the charter schools and many of them watch each and every dollar. And it's -- they're very concerned that they don't have enough money -- that's one of the reasons why they come to us and ask us for more money.

I also know that they are, a number of them, are looking to advance program. They are moving to the next step, whether they're adding another grade level. They're adding another school. And so the money that they are receiving is imperative, certainly, for paying personnel.

So, through you, Madam Speaker, if I might to the Chairman, could you please explain the thinking of why we are adding another layer of bureaucracy and why the money does not go directly to the charter schools? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker.

I don't accept the -- my good colleagues characterization of this is any added layer of bureaucracy. These are payments that will go to the LEA and be passed along directly to the charter schools. This reflects drafting that was in the Governor's original bill that the administration wanted to maintain, and the legislature choose to respect that.

But in terms of the charter schools operations, I

don't expect to see any change since it is the Legislature's intent the dollars go straight from LEA to the charter school without delay. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Was there any testimony during the -- I was not in the public hearings with the Education Committee -- was there any testimony from the charter schools regarding this particular payment structure? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, not that I recall.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

And I will say, if I may paraphrase you, Mr. Chairman, that your expectation is that the money would be immediately passed on once it's been received in the town. So for legislative intent, so the

expectation is the towns receive the money, they pass it along to the charter school.

I thank him for his -- his help on that.

Madam Speaker, we've talked before and I heard some of the questioning regarding -- emphasis is being pushed -- put on K through three students and their reading assessments and the interventions.

You know, we know that it is a very successful student who has mastered the reading fundamentals by the time they're in second or third grade. We know that a student who has those types of successes invariably also have the successes in math. They usually have successes in other school experiences, whether it is in science, whether it is social studies because reading is imperative.

We have gone over the past 30 years from a method of teaching students and in there had a very high expectation in each grade level, and students were retained if they did not succeed. We also went through an experimental phase where we just passed everyone along because we thought that that was better for them emotionally, because we thought that it was better for the school district, because we thought it was a good thing to do for the student and their

families and that they would catch up.

Madam Speaker, I also have been through the reading experiments where sight reading was taught. I've also been through the reading experiments where it was whole language and how that came about and where they would learn. And I've also been keenly aware they -- Henry Barnard did it. He was a Connecticut gentleman. He was also a very supportive early educator. He believed in early education and the success of a student. And I also have studied the Montessori method in which a student studies something until they are finished, until they are done, where their interest is. So, I guess, I sort of want to say, I've sort of been there, done that.

And certainly, my personal experience is that I didn't learn to read very well because I was one of those who was taught to sight read and they did not pick up that I was dyslexic until college. I had no phonics until I started into elementary education and thought, oh, is this what this it's all about? I was paying for a college course on it. It made a whole lot of sense to me, Madam Speaker, and so when I had my two children, I worked on phonics with them as very small children. And it makes me just fill with pride

when I play with my two-year-old grandson and he knows his letters and he knows his sounds to go with, perhaps, 17 letters already.

They can do it, Madam Speaker. They just have to be exposed. There has to be an interest.

Madam Speaker, there was a question I had for the good Chairman, and it was on section 90, 9-0, and it talks about minority students for special education and it was just for a clarification.

In the summary, at the end it says, for the section the minority student -- is in quotes -- means that those whose race is defined other than white, or whose ethnicity is defined as Hispanic or Latino by the federal Office of Management and Budget for the US Census use.

Could you please explain why we're using those particular terminologies? I was just a little confused by why that is in that particular section only and why we're going to the US Census? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Chair. The United States

Census provides us with the standard for defining people in terms of race and ethnicity. So in this bill as in any bill that we pass that speaks to those issues, we reference the most recent categories that were put forward by the US Census Bureau and/or other related federal agencies. Through you, Madam Chair.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Sawyer.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

I thank you for that.

In this particular section, the bill requires the State Department of Education to identify school districts that are -- that are disproportionately and inappropriately identify -- identified minority students as requiring special education due to reading deficiencies.

They expect that the State Department of Education will -- the study must examine the correlation between improvements in teacher training in the science of reading and the reduction in misidentification of students requiring special education services.

Madam Speaker, I -- I thoroughly applaud this, but I would also like to extend it to poor rural

districts. Oftentimes students are misidentified as special education because, as we've described before in reading, they haven't had the exposure. It doesn't matter the color. It doesn't matter their religion. What it does matter is that they are misidentified. It should not matter what school district it's in, and I am, I guess, a little disappointed that this is pointed at minority students. It should be all students in the State of Connecticut who are misidentified as needing special education because they have not been successful.

Madam Speaker, I've had the floor for rather a long time, and I would like to thank the work that these two Chambers have done in trying to put this together with the assistance of -- I was -- I'm going to use the word, outside council. Whether, it is the Governor's Office, whether it is the State Department of Education, and also I'd like to thank those professionals who have step forward and those parents who have said this is the most important thing to them that this Chamber is going to do.

But, Madam Speaker, this didn't go far enough. It's a touch. It's a touch on a lot of subjects that have been the sore -- the sores in our schools that

have not been successful. It's a touch to those communities who have not been able to be successful but those communities are not necessarily all in the cities. And I want to look at each and every student so that they have the experience that they'll be able to move forward with.

I'm hoping that this is the jumping off point for the next five years, Madam Speaker, that each and every year we take the next step, whether it is giving students more opportunities, whether it's identifying more students and getting them in the right category or whether it's getting all teachers the training that they need to teach because teach -- students need to be -- know how to read and be successful scholars all the way through high school.

Being on the higher Education Committee, we've been dealing with remediation that students need going to college so it hasn't stopped after 12th grade. We've tried to find ways to be able incorporate remediation with the actual class work so they only have to take one class and pay for that one class. So the success rate goes up as students go into the community college system. But, Madam Speaker, it means they've got to come out of high school with the

ability to be able to read at a highly functional level but also to be a successful student in whatever other area of education that they want to be, whether it's math, whether it's art, whether it's science -- my personal favorite -- whether they look at social studies or history as being something that's beloved to them.

Madam Speaker, we need to open up our educational system to give students more choices so that they can move forward in their lives and pick the direction they want to go in, and we have to make education the star in each and every one of our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Srinivasan, you have the floor, sir.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Good evening, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Good evening, sir.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

This piece of legislation that we have been discussing now for several hours is definitely a first

step. And as my Ranking Member in her opening remarks said so eloquently, it is a disappointment because it is just the first step. It is not the bold step that we hoped it would be earlier on in the session when just on Inauguration Day when we hoped that what we will see for Connecticut would be a very bold step.

It is the first step and my concern is how many such steps and how long will each step take us before we are able to close this achievement gap?

Representative Sawyer talked about a five-year project. My concern is even in five years taking such a small step as we are today, though we are taking one, will we accomplish what we want to accomplish what we want to see hopefully in our lifetime.

And as I see this achievement gap, I see two achievement gaps. Yes, we have the underperforming schools. No question about it all. They need to turn around, and we need to do the right thing by the underperforming schools but equally important is our achievement gap on the international scene. We are so far behind on an international level. If -- if memory serves me right, we're either 15th or 16th on the global scene, and we all know we live in a global world. We know the jobs are not just in the United

States. The jobs are all over the world. And we need to do as much as we do for our low performing schools -- obviously, on the top of our list in our criteria -- we need to look at our achieving schools as well.

As I look at this 185-page document, it is very distressing to see that there are only three lines about exemplary schools. I know the esteemed Chairman of the Education -- Education Committee has addressed issues regarding exemplary schools on two different occasions this evening, and I will definitely not be redundant and ask him those same questions again but, just through you, Madam Speaker to the proponent of this bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann, prepare yourself.

Representative Srinivasan, please proceed, sir.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Through you, Madam Speaker, if I could just have a definition of an exemplary school? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam School -- I believe an exemplary school is one that operates according to best practices and achieves exemplary results, in terms of the academic outcomes for the children in that school. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And these exemplary schools that we have, need to do much more than what we are doing. Yes, they are doing well within the state. They need to better at a national level and more important on an international level so that we are competitive when it comes to jobs on the global scene.

And that is my concern, our gaps are two front and we need to address them because, otherwise, as we see, our jobs slipping away, our economy in the rut and these jobs going to all other parts of the globe.

I, also, have a concern about the accountability of our evaluators. That is crucial, that is critical, because these are the people that are going to train, monitor and evaluate the teachers who are going to be in the classroom.

Through you, Madam Speaker to the proponent of the -- this piece of legislation.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Please proceed.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Through you, Madam Speaker, section 58, line 4038, for the superintendent, increases the probation period from 90 days to one year.

Through you, Madam Speaker, would the esteemed chairman be kind enough to give me the rationale behind this extension? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. I believe the intention here is to expand the pipeline of -- for -- for excellent potential superintendents, who may come to Connecticut from out of state or from -- from other walks of life with a desire to dedicate themselves to -- to efforts in education. And -- and specifically, in being superintendents for districts that need them. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

So, through you, Madam Speaker, will every -- every superintendent go through this one-year probation or only if they are out of state? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. You know, the answer is in the language before us. A local or regional board of education may appoint as acting superintendent a person who is not properly certified for a probationary period not to exceed one school year.

So this only is in regard to --

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Excuse me, Representative.

Over here, we're getting a little noisy.

Please proceed, sir. Please proceed, sir.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you.

So this section is designed for people who are not, at the moment, certified to be superintendents

but who demonstrate to a local or regional board that they have those capacities and are prepared, not only to take on the job in a probationary manner but also to go ahead and successfully complete a program during the course of that year, that first year of employment. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Through you, Madam Speaker. After the probation period is over, would that superintendent then be automatically certified or is there a process for that? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. As this section specifies, such appointing local or regional Board of Education may, after that probationary year, request the commissioner grant or waiver of certification for such acting superintendent pursuant to subsection (c).

So, as clear on its face, the local or regional board may request a waiver. Through you, Madam

Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

And through you, Madam Speaker. This certification that has been now achieved, will they -- will they go through a process -- or what is the process for them to maintain the certification? Through you, Madam Speaker, the 093, how will it be maintained? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. I believe that my good colleague may have misheard my last response.

The person who has successfully gone through the probationary period and received a waiver is not certified, they are someone teaching -- oh, I'm sorry, leading the district as a superintendent under a waiver and that's how this section reads. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So this waiver that this person has got because has got the capacity and the -- and the interest to go through this -- through this program, will that waiver be for a limited period of time or will they always have this waiver that they do not need the certification? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. So far as I can tell, this section of the bill is silent on that issue. However, under Connecticut statutes, superintendents have contracts that extend no longer than three years. So I would imagine that this person would have a three-year contract and at the end of such contract, they would be probably need to go through some additional waiver process. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Srinivasan.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I do want to thank the esteemed Chairman of the

Education Committee for his answers.

And I am concerned, as I said earlier on on this achievement gap. And what we started on earlier in the year, something very bold, something that we will -- I do not expect that we will close this gap in one year or two. No, that is not -- I know that is not realistic, much as we would all like that for our children. My concern is that this piece of legislation, for whatever be the reason, it does go enough, does not go far enough. And on paper, yes, we have made an attempt, an honest attempt, to close the achievement gap but, realistically, the gap both, at a local level and on the international scene, is far from being closed.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Ackert, you have the floor, sir.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Just to start with a couple comments. How we came into this year, calling it the Education Year, and I think at time we -- we thought that that was probably going to be in jeopardy that the powers to be were going to, you know, butt heads over it and not

come to some compromise. And I see that that hard work from the Education Committee and others -- stakeholders have really put in the yeoman's effort to do bring something that we can actually hang our hat on, I believe.

I believe that this legislation may not be the home run that we were looking for. I do think it's better than a step, though. I think that this actually will start to get us -- I mean, I would have loved to see more -- more early education slots. You know, we did -- there's a thousand slots so we're concerned on what the opening seats are. Some say they're 700. I think that there should be more than that, but let's get started with it. And as the good Chairman of the Education Committee mentioned, this is -- this is this year. You know, we're going to be looking at some of the studies that are going to come out, and we'll be bringing up next year.

The other area that I -- that I do think -- I think we really could have jumped into a little bit more and that's literacy. The early literacy program, I think we could have done more than, you know, a pilot study because it's just not certain districts that have a literacy problem. I serve a good-sized

community, plus, also two smaller communities, and I think that they also struggle with literacy areas. I think that that's an area that we need to continue focus on.

We do have three schools in the pilot program, hopefully, that -- they're already in the pilot program with -- nice to see that expanding 10 more slots. I think -- early literacy should be the state's school system, not just a certain amount of slots, and I know that that's where will be looking to go.

Many of the questions have been asked and as I listened to them, I crossed off most of my questions. My good gentleman that sits next to me asked most of them. I'm thinking that he might have been looking at my paperwork. But the -- and the during the reading -- you know, when you get a bill like this that is this large for some of us, especially, on this side of the aisle we haven't really had the opportunity to really digest this, and I think that the good Chairman has -- has done a -- a great job in answering our questions so that we can feel good about what we'll be voting for here tonight.

I had many, like many, some forums, some

discussions on the teachers not to happy with what was coming out. I think they'll settle for this. I think that they're going to look at what the evaluation program -- the process will be. I think that they will embrace that process as it goes forward, and I truly hope that they do. I think that the goal of this is always thinking about the children.

We looked at implementing some of the education -- exercise that -- for the earlier -- earlier children from K to five; the areas of certification for teachers, getting them into the classroom early than the junior years. I think that's a you know a -- a laudable -- exercise. I think then they're waiting for their junior year to see if they want to be a teacher.

The area I do have one question and that's because all of them were already asked, and I -- and I appreciate the Chairman's answers to them, and I was satisfied with all of those. Mine deals with lines -- line 4,325, so from you, Madam Chair, to the good gentleman.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Please frame your question, sir.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Mine was just on -- as he knows I've been working with a small town in my district and that's Columbia, one of the concerns of those was the because of the so many loss of their high school students and there -- and there reduction in students, was the minimum budget requirement. And I believe that they came up with a -- an excellent solution to this that will help that community out and many others, to be honest with you, but just for legislative intent. On 4,325 and starting earlier than that, it does talk about those high schools, those students, those areas that just have no high school and they -- all their students go out of the district. That this allows that -- that school district to deduct specifically just the tuition dollars for those students. Through you, Madam Chair -- Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Madam Speaker, first, I'd like to thank my good colleague not only for his question but for his decision not to ask other questions that have been previously asked and answered. I do appreciate that.

With regard to this question, yes, indeed, the

brackets that begin in line 4327 and end in line 4329, make it clear that for a school system that is sending students to high schools outside the district and paying tuition, if the number of students goes up that district may reduce its educational expenditures by the full amount of the increased tuition that it's paying, and we thought that this was only fair to districts in that circumstance. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And thank you to the good gentleman.

That has strapped that one community and maybe a couple others in the near future that some of the rural towns have student losses.

And I, too, stand in support of this new -- this legislation. I was one that voted against it in committee. I did not like where it was going in the early -- in the early legislation, but I think now that many of us on -- on both sides of the aisle are happy with where this is going, and I appreciate the time.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, sir.

Representative Holder-Winfield, you have the floor, sir.

REP. HOLDER-WINFIELD (94th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I appreciate a moment to make some statements. I don't usually rise if I'm going to push green because I think the green button indicates all that I feel about the bill and that I support the bill, but sometimes if I'm going to go in the other direction, I will rise to put comments on the record.

I think this bill is a bill that comes to us through a process that may not have been the process we wanted it to come through us by but a process that as the bill went along included a lot of people. I've heard a lot of conversations about what is good about this bill and things that people think that are bad about this bill.

I want to focus a little bit on some of the stuff that's been discussed tonight because I think they're parts about this bill that are good that we haven't actually said. And so when we talk about the part about reading, I'm little disappointed about the

reading. I think that we should have had a bigger, more real focus on reading, but we didn't. But there's some things that we did that go beyond a pilot. We put in place a definition of what we're talking about, which to many people's mind doesn't mean that much but to my mind it does.

We talked about creating a professional development system for those who are teaching reading, that it isn't in place. And that's just not in a pilot that goes beyond that. We have a requirement for a statewide reading plan by the State Department of Education that is in this bill.

And so we've done some things in this bill that go beyond the small pilot that what we are doing, but let me say this about the pilot. There's -- there's discussion about piloting and we put a couple of things together that I don't think necessarily go together.

So there's currently a pilot going on. What we're looking at reading assessment tool and that continues in this bill and then there's a small set of schools that will have these reading interventions done, and I would like it to be broader than it is, but we have what we have.

And I guess that gets me to why I feel the way I feel about this bill. I've been asked several times today about whether this bill was a huge thing, whether it was revolutionary, whether it was the way to go. I guess I feel this way, turning around schools is something that's happening across the nation. It's a good thing, but I don't think it's revolutionary. Establishing practices is something that we should have been doing.

So, I guess, I feel like we are just doing what we should be doing. And I guess I feel this way, I feel like we should have been doing this for a long time but, quite frankly, it wasn't until the State got embarrassed that we decided to do something about this.

We've known we had an achievement gap for quite a long time and it wasn't that we hadn't had an achievement that was small, we had a large achievement gap. But I -- as a person who's been endeavoring to do something about this even before I got elected, it just baffles me the way we've operated. And I have to tell you why it really baffles me. The Governor said at the end of last session, this session would be the session of education reform.

The policy making body of this state is this legislature and what this legislature has chosen to do is respond to what the Governor put on the table but we make policy. And perhaps, instead of just talking about whether what the Governor did was good or bad, we should have made some policy. We should have said what we thought was the way to proceed. That's what we're here for.

So I wanted to put those things on the record because that's how I feel, and I wanted to ask the proponent of the bill a couple of questions for clarification.

So, through you, Madam Speaker to Representative Fleischmann, I have a couple of questions.

Earlier, in conversation with Representative Hovey, I believe, there was discussion about the schools and the Commissioner's network. And I believe in response to Representative Hovey, Representative Fleischmann said that what we were doing was using those schools to figure out what best practices were so that we could implement those throughout our system. And I would ask if that is correct?

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. Though, there aren't as many aspects of the bill that make that clear, as I would like, that is indeed my intent and I believe the intent of many who were involved with the drafting of this bill. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Holder-Winfield,

REP. HOLDER-WINFIELD (94th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I -- that's important for me because I -- I thought what we were trying to do here was look at schools that have been failing for a long period of time and do something about those schools. And so I appreciate that we would put in place the best practices but in conversation about education reform it has been said to me several times in reminding me what we are doing that we know what the best practices are, but that the State of Connecticut doesn't do a good job of putting them in place.

So I guess my question is -- is that not true? Do we not know what best practices are and/or -- or have I just had a mistaken impression about how this conversation has evolved? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. I guess I'd respond in this way. We do know a fair amount about best practices. I don't believe we know as much as we should about how to implement best practices at schools that have been failing. We have a handful of examples of schools that have been turned around but not nearly as many as we ought to have, not nearly as many as we need to have.

So in responding to Representative Hovey, what I was talking about was not simply best practices in education and teaching but best practices in turning around schools and school systems that have been failing our children. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Holder-Winfield,

REP. HOLDER-WINFIELD (94th):

Yes, thank you, again, Madam Speaker.

And I guess on the issue of turning around, we come to the turnaround committees, which I believe if I'm looking at my notes, which is hard, a little difficult to see, I believe that starting on line

1024, we begin to talk about these turnaround committees.

I guess my question is I believe in one of the exchanges earlier there was discussion about the value of these turnaround committees and how they are put together and what they do and part of that was that there were representatives from the community on these turnaround committees. It is my understanding that the turnaround committee there is one per district.

So if you have a large district, like the district in New Haven, there may be one from the city, but I'm not sure that there's one actually from, what I would call, the community. I don't think if everyone in the City of New Haven as a part of what I would really call my community.

So I guess my question is -- and I think the -- Representative Fleischmann knows that it was the intention of those of us in the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus to move away from turnaround committees. And just leave the school governance council, which the turnaround committee consults with in place.

I guess my question is if we're really trying to have a connection to community, how do these turnaround committees actually do that?

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, if one looks at lines 1025 through 1033 of the bill, it's evident that of the two individuals appointed by the local or regional board, at least one of whom -- at least one of them shall be a parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the district. Of the three individuals appointed by the teachers, at least one of them shall be a parent or guardian of the student enrolled in the district; and at least two, shall be teachers who are part of that district. So when taken as a whole, it's pretty evident that that turnaround committee very much represents that community.

Further, I would point out that this turnaround committee is expressly directed to work in collaboration with the school governance council and take guidance from school governance councils in the district. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Holder-Winfield,

REP. HOLDER-WINFIELD (94th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I appreciate the answer from Representative Fleischmann.

I guess here is the point where I just tend to have a disagreement. My focus is on the turnaround committees not the school governance councils, which I have no issue with. And a turnaround committee in a large district, I just don't believe or really necessarily is reflective of the community. It may be reflective of the -- the -- it may have people from that district, but I don't believe it's necessarily reflective of the community.

As a matter of fact, I believe that it is possible that members who are involved in community could just not know the people who are a part of that turnaround committee but such as the bill as it is.

I want to speak a little bit about the reading exam because I heard discussion about that earlier. When the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus was working on the reading bill, the reason that we had the reading exam was because there was an action to be taken if the reading exam wasn't passed because we didn't want people in place teaching our young people to read who didn't understand the science of reading and couldn't pass that exam. And so what we had endeavored to do

was to say that should the individual who's in front of this person not be able to pass this reading exam a certain number of times that, perhaps, they should be counseled to go somewhere else.

So in Representative Fleischman's discussion earlier, when asked about what the action actually was, I think he indicated that the State Department of Education would come up with something. And, of course, he doesn't know it but I hope that with whatever they come up with is something to find a way, not to be punitive, but to remove those people who maybe should not be teaching our young people at the point where they're learning to read from that classroom.

And so I guess I will wrap up my comments there, but let me just say I am appreciative of the work done by both chairs of Education and the ranking members. And I want to say to the ranking member in the room that I appreciate how when given the work that we have been doing, the caucus that is, on the reading bill that she gave us input and has worked with us going forward.

And I thank you, Madam Speaker for giving me the opportunity to make some comments on the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you Representative.

Representative Rojas, you have the floor, sir.

REP. ROJAS (9th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to support the bill.

I have just one question, and then I'll make a comment to offer Representative Fleischmann.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Prepare, Representative.

Please frame your question, Representative Rojas.

REP. ROJAS (9th):

In section 57, for purposes of legislative intent, I wish to clarify that in line 3985 to 3987, concerning the ability to extend the time period for evidence and testimony. A board, subcommittee of the board or impartial hearing officer only has the power to extend their own respective hearing. For example, the board or subcommittee of the board cannot extend a hearing beyond being held before an impartial hearing officer; is that correct?

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. If I understood the question correctly, I believe the answer is yes. The power to extend the hearing is only in the case of the hearing immediately before this subcommittee of the board not some other hearing that they're not party to. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Rojas.

REP. ROJAS (9th):

I'd like to thank Chairman Fleischmann for his response.

Madam Speaker, today, we are in a better place than we were three months ago when this debate -- debate began. No longer are we going to accept chronically underperforming schools and that is a good day for the State of Connecticut, and more importantly, it's a good day for our districts and for our children.

Unfortunately, over the time -- over the last three months, the debate moved in the direction of assigning blame. We wanted to blame teachers, we wanted to blame parents, we wanted to blame poverty. I say enough with the blame. Yes, students, teachers, and parents must be held accountable. But when we

begin to assign blame, we create divisions between the very people we need to be partners in the education of our children. Parents and teachers, together, are the answer to the achievement gap crisis we face. Let us no longer engage in the kind of rhetoric that divides those two groups.

When we talk about accountability, we should talk about it in the context of our work that we are responsible for. We are policymakers. For far too long, state inaction has resulted in underperformance in too many of our schools. It has weakened our teacher evaluation system, it has limited access to quality early childhood education. It has allowed us to take for granted our most important educational tool, the teaching of reading during our children's early years.

Today, we can change that status quo. Today, we can vote to allow for state intervention that will result in partnership with local districts and not a state takeover. We can vote for additional resources where there are needed most. We can vote to improve and redefine the teaching of reading, so that students can learn to read by grade three and so that moving forward they can read to learn.

Today, Madam Speaker, we can vote to respect the teaching profession, and I will be proud to do that today when I make my vote.

I want to thank everyone who's acknowledged the work of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus. We worked really hard on this bill and on the reading portion of this bill. I want to thank all of my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, for their work. I want to thank the Governor for his vision and his leadership. I want to thank Commissioner Pryor for his professionalism and providing access to all of his staff. I want to thank both the teachers unions and reform advocates for their efforts, because at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, both sides have the same goal in mind, the education of our children, the education of my children.

In closing, I want to offer particular thanks for those who worked so hard on the literacy portions of the bill. We began our work ten months ago, and I am proud to have been part of that effort. Representative Holder-Winfield was our champion, and I thank him for his leadership, Representative Billy Miller was the heart and soul of our effort, and I really thank her for putting up with my antics as much

as she does. I want to thank Representative Walker for helping to secure the funding so we can undertake our effort in reading. I want to thank Elaine Zimmerman and Steven Hernandez from the Commission on Children for providing their guidance and support. I want to thank Margie Gillis from Literacy How for her world class expertise, and lastly, I want to thank our LCO, Chris Cordima for his patience and dedication to making this bill where it is today, Madam Speaker.

And with that, Madam Speaker, this is a good bill and it ought to pass.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Pat Miller, you have the floor, ma'am.

REP. MILLER (145th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise in support of this bill.

I remember during my freshman year, there was a piece of legislation that I couldn't support because I thought it was too extreme. A colleague of mine told me that, at least, it would start the conversation. So I would like to thank the Governor for starting

the conversation.

Education reform must have literacy as its first floor. Throughout the education reform discussion, there was -- there has been a great deal of focus on cost, teacher evaluation and labor issues, all of which have been addressed in this bill. Although these are key concerns, what stands out most to me is that 75 percent of Black and Hispanic children are not reading at goal, and 44 percent are not reading at proficiency. This is a train to prison. Yet, 95 percent of all children can learn to read.

So this bill moves to our numbers -- move our numbers from 25 percent of students of color reading at goal to all children of color masterfully reading to learn and to discover but this cannot occur without major reform in how we teach reading. This must occur through professional development, reading -- new reading assessment tools, incentives for schools, parent information, and a reading plan.

This bill brings in research-based literacy interventions. They include permission to change our reading assessments tools to modern teacher-friendly assessments that help us help children, quicker and more successfully.

A comprehensive professional development plan for both teachers and principals. Principals need to know how to assess their classrooms and how to know if their teachers are able to assess a child's reading skills in detail.

I remember going to a -- attending a -- a seminar, a workshop for teachers and principals who participated in the pilot program for the new assessment tool. And there was a principal there and I'll always remember his enthusiasm, he was from West Haven. And this principal went out and bought new Ipads for all of his teachers and he was -- he was elated that all of his teachers from the new ones to old ones were engaged, engaged in teaching literacy to the students. Teachers were now a part of the literacy plan for each and every student. So it wasn't it just the literacy coach or the interventionists, it was the teacher and the literacy coach, so everyone was invested.

This bill includes incentives for schools that improve their literacy trend line, because up to now there's been no positive enforcement if a school improves reading scores. Notably, we are ensuring that our preservice teachers in special education and

our preservice teachers, reading specialists have a professional test in the science of teaching reading so they can have a positive impact in our classrooms.

We are finally linking early childhood and kindergarten with transition planning to ensure that pre-K teachers talk to the kindergarten teacher about the early literacy and vocabulary skills of each child.

Lastly, this bill also addresses the fact that 40 percent of children, 40 percent of children, that's 10 percent away from 50 percent of children, who are referred to special education simply because they were not taught to read. Many of these children are Black and Hispanic. We strive to narrow this through much better assessment and professional development.

Children who cannot read by the end of third grade are not able to succeed. They drop out. This bill helps children learn to read in grades K through three so that they can read to learn.

As well as the Governor, I would like to thank the Commissioner Pryor and his staff, leadership, the Chairs of the Education Committee, the Ranking Members of the Education Committee and, as Representative Holder-Winfield had mentioned, especially the Ranking

Member that's in this room, the Chairs of the Appropriations Committee who made sure that we had the money to -- to implement these -- this reading program.

And finally about 25 years ago, the General Assembly had the insight to create a commission that deals specifically with children's issues. I would like to thank Elaine Zimmerman of Commission on Children and her team for partnering with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus in making sure that literacy be addressed in our state's education reform legislation.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Shaban, you have the floor, please.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A couple of comments, then a couple of questions follow it up.

I, too, stand in support of this bill, and I think for the many of the same reasons that you've

heard.

You know, I take a slightly different cut at this than some folks because as this debate has wound out for the last few months, you hear things about how improved education is going to make Connecticut a more competitive place, or make our children a more competitive people. And all that's true but what I think -- I think what the discussion misses at its core is the fact that a superior and appropriate education -- which, by the way, is guaranteed in our state constitution, which is rare -- that a superior education also guarantees our existence as a free society.

People who -- who grow up knowing what they know, knowing what they don't know, knowing what question to ask, knowing what issues they wish to resolve are the key ingredient to a free and successful society. So I applaud this effort, and I applaud the Governor as I have for months for taking a first cut at it.

I was happy to see that our colleagues, Democrats, republicans, senators, you know, the -- the Department of Education, everybody, was finally able to come together on a bill that made some sense.

Now, with that, I mean it's not a perfect bill

and what bills are. More could be done. There are a few things that I'm glad got dropped out of the bill, but with that, one of the things that still hangs in the bill kind of concerns me so if I could, through you, I have a couple of questions to the proponent of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann, prepare yourself.

Representative Shaban, please proceed.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Specifically, I -- go to section 17, the -- I guess we were calling it the small school district part of the bill. Initially, there was a penalty, if you would, for small school districts who spend more than a certain formula that they were going to get reduced to state aid or -- or state funding that has now been seemingly reduced to a study.

But with that, my question, through you, Madam Speaker, is the meaning in line 365, where the department shall consider (1), financial disincentives for any small district, in which the per pupil cost for the prior fiscal year exceeds the state average per pupil cost for the previous physical year,

pursuant to the formula in there.

Through you, Madam Speaker, what financial disincentives are we speaking about? Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, the measurement before us is silent on the specifics, and we leave that to the task force rather than micromanaging them. Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Shaban.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Well, thank you, Madam Speaker.

And thank you for the answer because, I guess, I -- was really one of the hang-ups with the first bill is it did seem to try and micromanage some things, and I'm glad some of those issues are going to get teased out in the pilot program, and I applaud that -- I applaud that result but, I guess, maybe instead of asking specifically what financial disincentives mean, why impose or consider a financial disincentive in the first place? Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker, as I indicated earlier in this discussion, the administration had initially proposed implementing financial disincentives starting in the coming school year, and I heard from colleagues on both sides of the aisle that that was a concern. I also heard from folks in the administration that they believe that there were more economies that could be achieved and, perhaps, even better educational results.

So we chose a middle path of having a group come together to study the issue. This talks about disincentives. I think incentives should also be discussed. I think a combination of carrots and sticks could lead to some types of regional efficiencies but that is work that we are giving to the task force. And we'll look forward to seeing what they report back to us and leave in the hands of the next General Assembly, the ability to choose whether -- or how to act upon the recommendations of the task force. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Shaban.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I thank the gentleman.

I guess that's the -- the main concern I have here is the carrot, yes, but stick? I mean a stick, you're going to use a stick on a school district, on a small town school district that spends more -- that decides to spend more on its pupils than some other communities are able to or decide to?

I mean, I think that -- that's a concern. And I'm glad to see at least that -- that concern was addressed by reducing it to a study but the fact that it's being studied at all is a problem because one of the things that you get in a small towns, such as the three towns I represent, is a decision to move to that town and to pay very high property taxes because you've decided, at a local level, that you wish to contribute to a superior school system.

We're lucky to be able to have that choice, not everybody has that choice, that's why this 185-page bill is out here, and I applaud that. But at the same time while you're using carrots and new models to improve everybody, you shouldn't be dragging down people who have decided to spend more. So I -- I hope

that that study maybe focuses on carrots and not so much on sticks.

Through you, same -- similar question in the same section, if I may, lines 381 through 383, and I raised this question, I think, in committee. I'm not sure anyone had an answer, and I'm not sure the gentleman does now, but I raise it just so it's out there.

When we say "small school district," it's defined as any local or regional board of education with an average daily membership, as defined in Title 10, of less than 1,000 pupils.

Through you, Madam Speaker, my question is and -- and the gentleman probably knows this, specifically, there are certain regional school districts, mine included, that doesn't have -- that that's sort of a hybrid system. We have two towns with separate elementary schools but the two towns share a regional high school.

Through you, Madam Speaker, has there been any consideration of how that that 1,000-pupil count is going to be applied? Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. That's one of many areas that the Education Committee found ambiguous and unclear in the original proposal put before us, and it's one of the reasons that we're doing a study. We'd like this task force that comes together to help us understand in the instance that Representative Shaban has described, whether it makes sense to include such regional districts in any such system. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Shaban.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Well, I thank the gentleman for his response.

With that, would it be more accurate then to read the "or" in line 381, as an "and, slash, or," i.e., because I understand -- I understand your response. And I appreciate it because I think it's the right thing to do, but if we're going to study it, let's study it. But that study is going to be limited by the legislative language so any administrative discretion is going to need some guidance from us. Right now, it says "any local or regional board of education."

And through you, Madam Speaker, would it be more accurate for legislative intent, for history purposes, that that could be read vis-a-vis the research project we're talking about, means any local and/or regional board of education? Through you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. I believe both the traditions of this Chamber and the methods by which the Judiciary understands what we do here, we're -- we must stick to the plain English understanding of the text before us. So the line is as it reads, "small district" means any local or regional board of education with the average membership described.

That said, a task force has latitude to -- to work as it sees fit. So if, for instance, the task force finds that it doesn't make sense to look at consolidation of regional small boards of education because they're already regionalized that would be a perfectly reasonable conclusion for them to come to if that's what their research showed them. So it's just a task force, and I think we should trust them to do their work. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Shaban.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Well, thank you, Madam Speaker.

And that's -- that's more or less the answer I was -- I anticipated and I was hoping for. I wanted something on the record and in something in public that says the task force has the latitude to consider, you know, a slight tweak. It's not a hard "or." We consider individual situations as we find them in our local towns.

So with that, I thank the gentleman for his responses. I thank him for his work on this bill. I thank everyone else in this chamber for the work on this bill because, like everyone has said before, this is the most important thing we've done in this session and probably the last two sessions so I'm glad to have been a part of it, and I thank you and the Chamber for your time.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, sir.

Representative Roldan, you have the floor, sir.

REP. ROLDAN (4th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, first, let me thank the House and Senate leaders and my fellow Black and Latino Caucus members for getting a bill to us that will set us in the right direction of improving and raising student achievement in the State of Connecticut.

Madam Speaker, I have been involved in a world of education reform for quite some time and you and I have worked together on these issues for a number of years and, frankly, for most of my professional career. And during the last years, for eight years, in fact, I serve as chief educational policy advisor to the Mayor of Hartford, six of which I spent overseeing the development and education reform in Hartford.

And, Madam Speaker, over that period of time, I have been involved in the design and redesign of over 20 schools in the city of Hartford. It's hard work. It's extremely, extremely difficult work. And in the words of the CEA president, it is very complex. At the same time, I believe that there is nothing more important than the work we are trying to do tonight.

Education is the only thing that I know for a fact and for sure that can impact a life of a child

and take that child from poverty straight to the middle class. My mom taught me that, that there is nothing more important than that and she certainly work hard to raise eight children in Stowe Village as a single mom.

Madam Speaker, this -- this bill is a major step forward in closing the achievement gap, but let me very clear that this is just a single step. The Chinese they said, what is it? A journey is started with a -- what is it? A journey of a thousand steps is started with a single step.

It takes a long time to see marked improvement, a very long time. So we should temper our expectations and understand that what we are doing tonight is giving the Commissioner, our districts, and our state the tools to commence meaningful change in the State of Connecticut.

We should not expect that a year from now we will be number one and not number 15, in the race to close the achievement gap. Nationally, I hear, when I travel across the country, that we need an education framework that will get us in the right direction of changing and improving student achievement. Well, this bill is just the beginning of that and it will

lead to meaningful change. It will lead to meaningful change to, Madam Speaker, to the kids MD Fox, the kids at Betances, the Burr Elementary School, Bulkeley High School, just to name a few, all schools in my district in the City of Hartford.

That being said, I have one concern and a question that I would like to frame to the Chairman.

Madam Speaker, on page 125 of the bill, we provide for a probationary period for someone who is not properly certified as a superintendent. "Properly" here, means according to what we say in the State of Connecticut.

This means that a person -- and by the way, the person has to take an undefined school leadership program. This means that if you have successfully served as a superintendent for most of your career and for the last 30 years in New York, Massachusetts, or anywhere in the country, where it might make sense to recruit a superintendent. This act will -- this will act as a deterrent and limit the pool of candidates that would think about this.

So if you are somewhere in the country and you are a successful superintendent, the only reason that you would not consider coming to Connecticut is

because not only would you be told that you are not qualified, even though you served 30 years somewhere else but not only that you have to take a course, an undefined course, that you have to pass, according to some standard in order to be considered a superintendent. Well, that, to me, is not reasonable.

Madam Speaker, number two, I'd like to be able to ask a couple of questions to the proponent of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann, prepare yourself.

Representative Roldan, please frame your question.

REP. ROLDAN (4th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the question refers to sections related to English language learners, ELL, as it's most commonly known in this state and in the bill. And it relates to how those services are being provided on various occasions.

Madam Speaker, on page 273, to be more specific, lines 2334 to 2341 -- and this is something that I'm very grateful to the Chairman and for the leaders to having addressed earlier on, but there's something

that I'd like to clarify on this. It speaks to dual language in schools. And it states that the purpose and specialists focus is to provide dual language programs or other models focusing on language acquisition for English language learners.

I'd just like to be able to clarify -- first clarify that a dual language program is an educational program in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages, most commonly being Spanish and English.

Now, it doesn't have to always be Spanish and English. It could be English; it could be Arabic; it could be Chinese; it could be French; it could be any other language. There are not ELL programs. The goal is to be able to attain dominance of both languages being biliterate and bilingual in the specific language.

To that, Madam Speaker, I'd also have to like to refer to page 76, lines 2443 to 2451. Once again, Madam Speaker, the question of ELL learners comes up. And specifically, Madam Speaker, it says that in this section that such a state or local charter school has as its primary purpose the establishment of education programs defined -- designed to serve one or more of

the following populations. One of those options being English language learners. Well, English language learners, those are programs in support of students in getting them to acquire a second language in precision. There not meant to be whole school programs. So, to me, this language means that you conceivably have a charter school design around this purpose, which is to my understanding is not the intent of either page 73 or page 76, in the aforementioned lines.

So, through you, Madam Speaker to the Chairman of the Education Committee, whom I'm very grateful for all of his work, I want to make sure that the legislative intent here is not to create charter schools that are solely designed around the purpose of providing ELL program; in other words, that these are not charter schools that would -- could possibly be designed that would increase racial isolation and targeted in way and, therefore, undermining and being currently going against the intent of the Sheff versus O'Neill case.

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I read both sections to which Representative Roldan has to referred in the same way he does. It seems to me that it would be both counter to major Supreme Court ruling and counter to good educational practice to have a charter school that -- that's concentrated ELL learners alone and -- and sought to serve them alone rather the notion of a dual language program, as Representative Roldan so eloquently described, to provide strong, excellent basic skills in two languages simultaneously and making sure that for children who come from a household where English is not their first language that they gain strong literacy and fluency, both in their mother tongue and in English or in English and another language. That is the appropriate goal and that we should never in this bill or any bill before us seek to concentrate children in a way that runs contrary to the holding in Sheff versus O'Neill. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Roldan.

REP. ROLDAN (4th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With that, I'd like to thank the Chairman for his answer. I'd like to thank everyone that spent a considerable amount of time on reaching this consensus bill. It has been a significant amount of work. It does set us in the right direction of where we need to go. And my hope and expectation is that this will lead to Connecticut not being last in the race to close the achievement gap but that rather, four or five years from now, we'll be able to say that today was a significant step in closing the achievement gap and that we're not last but rather we are number one.

Madam Speaker, thank you for your time and thank you to the Chamber.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Lesser, you have the floor, sir.

Representative Lavielle, you have the floor, ma'am.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Re-good evening, as they say in some parts and thank you for the second time.

I have one question for the proponent, if I may.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann, prepare.

Representative Lavielle, please frame your question.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I wanted to ask the Representative, last time we -- well, not last time, but when we met in committee on March 26th on this bill, we discussed mandate relief for high performing school districts. And the good Chair of the committee referred to the work being done by task force that is engaged in that. And I wondered if he could report to us on what they're doing currently and when they're due to submit something for us?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Through you, Madam Speaker. It's my understanding that the Governor working in concert with the Commissioner of Education is putting together a task force to cut red tape for high performing schools and high performing districts. It's my expectation that they will have recommendations for

this General Assembly in time for the 2013 regular session. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I thank the Representative for that answer that was -- that was as I remembered it.

The -- as -- as this bill has been circulating for the past several months, obviously, it addresses many issues that are present in districts -- in school districts where there are problems, where there are low rates of literacy, where is there is high poverty, where there are -- for whatever reason -- low rates of student growth and achievement.

I think we've said a number of times that a one-size fits all approach to education can't possibly work for all districts. And while I represent the city of Norwalk, which has a number of schools that aren't achieving and are in need of some -- having that be addressed, I also represent the town of Wilton and the town Westport is coming into my district, both of those towns have schools that have done very, very well, conspicuously well. We're surrounded by a

number of other towns that are in the same boat, as it were.

And one of the concerns they have is that, as we devote -- and as we should -- a great deal of attention to schools that are not performing and that's fine, they are increasingly concerned that they will be able to keep up the levels of high performance that they have already demonstrated. And the pressure that they feel from getting the vast majority of their funding from property taxes, it's always over 90 percent -- again, as it should be because these are -- tend to be wealthier communities -- that eventually they're not going to be able deal with the cost.

And it's not just a question of cost, it's a question of human resource. It's a question of intellectual capital. It's a question of time and what they have to devote that ends up costing money. And one of -- one of the questions they continually ask me in all of our discussions was, how can we get relief from some of these mandates that are not helping us continue to produce these results. We're doing it well. We know how to do this. We have the resource to do this. If we could just get on with it, we could continue to produce these good results and

even improve.

And that goes not only for the administrators and the parents and the students and the school boards in these districts but, also, for the teachers -- the very teachers who had a number of other issues with this bill but they are all seeking mandate relief.

So I -- Madam Speaker, the Clerk has an amendment it is friendly, LCO Number 5426. I ask that the Clerk call the amendment and that I be allowed to summarize.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Will the Clerk, please call LCO 5426, which will be Schedule House Amendment "A."

THE CLERK:

LCO 5426, House "A" offered by Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

May I -- may I be allowed to summarize, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

The Representative has asked leave to summarize.

Is there any objection? Is there any objection?

Hearing none, please proceed, ma'am.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I -- I would like to ask that the vote be taken by roll call, and the -- the amendment actually, creates a task force to study two questions: one, is how do you define a high performing district, what are the criteria?

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Lavielle, you have to move adoption before --

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I'm so sorry.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

-- before you ask for a roll call.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

You're welcome.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

I move adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

The motion is on adoption.

Will you remark further?

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I knew something was missing. I appreciate it. I'm sorry.

Thank you.

So -- to summarize, the amendment creates a task force made up of various members of various legislators, teachers, administrators, and so on, who know the field. They would have two tasks: one, would be to identify criteria for distinguishing what is a high performing district and what isn't; and then to identify a list of mandates, which would go far beyond mandates that simply involve red tape. One might be in-schools suspension, another might be certain items included in a curriculum. All of these things reporting, as well, which is red tape, that a whole variety of mandates from which high performing districts could elect to be relieved should they so choose.

And they would render a report on October 1st of this year, submit recommendations and that would be ready for enactment next year.

I will simply stress that the high performing districts in my region of the state feel this is urgent and that the financial pressure has become too

great.

So, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I -- I, again, and I would ask the vote be taken roll call.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative, do you still want to ask --

Oh, all right then.

All those in favor of a roll call vote, please indicate by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

In the Chair's opinion, the 20 percent has been met.

When the vote is taken it will be taken by roll.

Representative Fleischmann, please, will you care to remark to Senate -- House Amendment "A"?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

I -- I do, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is the tradition of this Chamber that the proponent of the measure before us characterizes an amendment as friendly or unfriendly; and in this case, I view this as an unfriendly amendment.

First of all, if one looks at its language, it talks about this task force identifying education mandates that impede high academic performance. Now, we do have mandates in this state and they involve making sure that children with special needs get the special education that they deserve; that school districts have proper disciplinary systems, et cetera. I'm not aware of state mandates that impede high academic performance.

So I -- I think the drafting of this amendment is -- is somewhat questionable. But, more broadly, last night -- or I should say early this morning, the Senate debated for hours and sent down to us this measure that people from both sides the aisle have agreed is a very strong measure. If we were to pass this amendment, we would be out of concurrence with the Senate and would send this bill back up to the Senate, jeopardizing its chances during this short session.

Last, but not least, in the discussion that preceded this amendment being called. I believe I made it clear that the Governor and the Commissioner of Education have committed to not only creating a task force that examines unnecessary red tape, not

only looking to link the cutting of such red tape to high academic performance for schools and school districts but to get back to us before next session so that we can address the recommendations of that gubernatorial task force.

So this amendment is -- is not -- though, well intended, not well drafted, would put us out of concurrence with the Senate, and it's not necessary given with what the Governor's already doing.

I hope my good colleagues will join me in voting down this amendment and moving through this bill un-amended.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you.

Representative Sawyer, you have the floor, ma'am.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good evening.

You know, we have looked at mandates over the years and sometimes we have created them and, unfortunately, not very often have gotten rid of them. We've done them usually in the name of good government, something good for consumers. And sometimes we've done it saying that it is absolutely

essential for the education for our children. But what we've also done, Madam Speaker, is we haven't look thoroughly and gone back and figured out what it is that needs to be repealed.

You know, I've joked -- and many people have heard me say this through the years, is we should have someday a repeal session. Where there would be great glory in whatever we could repeal, but that will take a few more years of convincing, Madam Speaker, and but at this time I would like to ask a few questions to the -- through you to the proponent of the amendment.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Lavielle, prepare yourself.

Representative Sawyer, please frame your question.

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We had in a former administration through Governor Rell and, actually, before that when she was lieutenant governor, she traveled around to 169 towns. And on those tours, that statewide tour, she had discussions with the civic leaders wanting to know what was it that they wanted to see reduced as far as mandates. There were a number of educational mandates

at the time. There is, actually, quite a thick study that came out as to the entire municipal mandates but quite a few of them were educational mandates.

So I'd like to ask at this time to the good Representative who brought out the amendment, Representative Lavielle, what are some of the mandates that she envisions that this particular amendment would cover?

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker, is it live, is it working?

Thank you.

To Representative Sawyer through you. There are about as many answers to that as there are school districts and -- and often very little agreement between them. Mostly, I have heard concerns expressed about reporting. I have heard concerns about in-school suspension. I have heard concerns about various curriculum requirements in what things that are considered in some of these school districts that get great results to be nonessential subjects that either don't serve a purpose for exams that are

necessary to pass for going to college or for advance placement courses, things like that.

So there's -- there is wide variety and one of the reasons for establishing a task force is for them to get to the bottom of that and find out just exactly what the different school districts could do without.

So I -- I wouldn't want to speculate too much on what they might turn up.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you.

Representative Sawyer

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you.

I appreciate her honesty in that and, certainly, mandates have been a concern because not all school districts are alike.

We know that our school districts range from the very smallest, that can be a K-12 system with less than a 1,000 students to very, very large school district in which a 1,000 is only the tip of the iceberg in one school.

Through you to the, again proponent, the good Representative. Is there an expectation that they're

-- why -- why would we be wanting to reduce some of these mandates? Would it be your expectation that it would be a dollar savings? Would it be an expectation that there will be an educational shift? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Through you, Madam Speaker.

We have tried often in my town of Wilton to quantify what eliminating certain mandates would mean, and it appears most often that -- because that dollar figure is so hard to grasp -- that the greatest savings is time. We often hear in our school districts about the value of small class size and having teachers who can spend their time teaching as opposed to doing administration and mechanical tasks and things that don't really use their greatest competency, which is helping children to learn. And that's what so many of these mandates do. And if you have so many teachers doing administrative things, you just need more of them to do the teaching.

So I -- my view and I may be wrong is that the greatest commodity we save through this exercise is

time and, secondarily, human resource but that -- those two things in themselves are worth a very great deal.

Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Sawyer

REP. SAWYER (55th):

Thank you, and I appreciate the gentlelady's answer.

You know one of things that I have always been a proponent of and that is when we allow -- when our students get to be in 11th and 12th grade, one of the things that we should be doing is allowing for waivers. Particularly, students who are highly successful, students who are in schools that are have been proven to be highly successful. So you have a situation where you have an 11th and 12th grader and they have been very successful across their studies and they have now gotten to that point in their life that they want to make their own choices. Should we offer them a -- an option?

Let's say a student wants to take another foreign language. They're -- they're proficient in two and they'd really like to be a linguist in their life.

Should they be allowed to have a waiver from one social studies -- oh, my goodness, some historians will shoot me when I say that -- but should they be given a waiver for one British literature course to be able to study another foreign language?

And the reverse side, we have a student that wishes to be an engineer. He knows that's his passion, his drive, he studied the mathematics, and yet, he has had a packed schedule, he would like to have, again, perhaps, a waiver from the mandated art requirement that we so heavy-handedly mandated recently. That he would like to CAD/CAM, or he would like to take -- because he wants to -- to do some of the creative things with his engineering background, he would like to take some metalworking because he wants to create.

So I could see where that would be imperative that we give that type of a student a waiver. He's a top student. Why wouldn't we give him the opportunity to choose a course over another course. But no, Madam Speaker, we have a mandated a high school curriculum that puts kids in a box. A box, all the way through 12th grade, for the courses that they must take and we have given no waiver process.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to support this amendment because I think it is something that has been talked about, whispered about, what we should be doing. We should be giving mandate relief. There's nothing harsh in here. There's nothing terribly unexpected. It sets up a task force.

Madam Speaker, I would highly endorse this because I think it falls under the category of education reform, and we should be looking at our top scoring high schools.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Representative Srinivasan, you have the floor, sir.

REP. SRINIVASAN (31st):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise in strong support of this amendment.

Earlier on in our conversation -- now, it looks like several hours ago, I had made the comment that in this 185-page document that we have, we have three lines on exemplary schools. I talked about how we are, how we have an achievement gap on an international level. So, yes, we need to focus very much on our schools that are low performing. No

question about that at all. But on the radar on a continual basis, consistent basis, needs to be our schools that are performing well so that these jobs that are out there globally will be our jobs, will be jobs for Connecticut. Something we all know and agree upon need very much.

Earlier on in our conversation on the exemplary schools when on two occasions and for -- and for that reason, I did not repeat the question, we are informed that the criteria for what the exemplary schools will be receiving is something that we are not yet clear about. We still don't know what are we going to give to our exemplary schools. This is what was told to us right here in the chamber of this House. Are we going to give them financial incentives? Are we going to relieve them of some mandates? In what way are we going to excel our exemplary schools?

So what this does here in this amendment, it gives us an opportunity to look at what can we do to our exemplary schools so they can be, not one notch better, but several notch better and, hence, compete on the international scene.

So for that reason, Madam Speaker, I urge adoption of this amendment. And I hope for our

exemplary schools for us to have a road map as to how can our schools do better and, significantly better, we create the task force that will look at our exemplary schools, look at the mandates and see what can they be relieved of so that we can do even better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, sir,

Representative Crawford, you have the floor.

REP. CRAWFORD (35th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise in opposition to this amendment for the simple reason that I'd like to see us work more on streamlining government.

We already have superintendents for all of these districts who are grouped into professional organizations. A simple letter from the Commissioner and they'd be more than happy to put down six or eight or ten or twelve mandates that they think ought to be investigated, and it would be a very simple process.

We don't need to create another group to compile this information. Once the facts are available, I think they could be given to the Education Committee and those indicators could be looked at to see what

might be done. But I think as a -- a former teacher in one of those high performing districts, I always felt very, very blessed to be there. And I think we continue to do that by recognizing that there are simple ways to do things and if we keep those in mind, then we'll continue to be superior.

Thank you for your time.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you, sir,

Representative Perone, you have the floor, sir.

REP. PERONE (137th):

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I rise to oppose this amendment. The -- the simple truth is over -- over the last several months, it's been clear that there have been a considerable number of -- of studies amassed. I'm holding, yet, another study that was done here by Research Center through Education Week. This is Connecticut -- this is on -- on Connecticut. They, incidentally, gave the state of Connecticut a C, overall, for -- for education but just -- just a sample of what they -- they got here with regards to equity and spending indicators. They -- they got a wealth neutrality score. They have a -- an actual spending as a percent

of amount needed to bring all students into median level, and on and on and on.

Ladies and gentlemen, I submit to you that we have done our -- our studies. We have given a great deal of thought, overall, the last several months to the study and -- and what -- and what we need to do to help our -- our schools. The people of our -- our districts have send us up here and have asked us, in short, to be the task force, to lead this state in a new direction and -- and improve education for -- for our children in a way that -- that makes Connecticut truly the best place on earth to live and -- and work and raise a family.

I think this is -- this is an historic moment for us in regards to education, and I urge opposition to this amendment.

Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Thank you.

Representative McCrory, you have the floor, sir.

Representative Cafero, you have the floor, sir

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I stand in strong support of this

amendment.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have talked for years and years and years about education. We've talked for years and years and years about relieving mandates.

This bill that we have before us, the crux of it, has dealt with those struggling school systems, in some cases, failing school systems, with turnaround schools, with regard to provisions that will help teachers be above average instead of below average, with support and evaluations, et cetera.

And unfortunately, all the talk has been on that, and little talk has been on the some successes that we appreciate here in Connecticut. You know, we have good school systems, here, in Connecticut. We have good teachers, here, in Connecticut. And we sort of ignored them throughout this bill.

We've said you're doing okay. You don't need our money, and we don't give it to them.

You don't need our help, and we don't give it to them.

And you know what?

You talk to people from those successful school districts and they say we don't need your money, thank you. We don't need your help, thank you. But just

leave us alone. Stop sending down from Hartford mandate after mandate after mandate that distracts us from doing what we do best.

Since I've been in this legislature over the last 20 years, all we ever talk about is mandate relief. We started a blue task, ribbon it, do -- whatever you can do to mandate relief, we've talked about it, fought for it, streamlined it, but we've never done it, we've never done it.

And this amendment, basically, says in the scheme of this incredible bill that we all hope to pass overwhelmingly, as it passed the Senate, let's recognize those school systems that have done it right. Oh, maybe we can't give them a lot of money -- or any money for that matter. As a matter of fact, this bill specifically says if you read it in reverse that the best performing school systems will receive not another nickel. It's okay. That's okay. But, for God sakes, let's give them the relief that we promised.

We have reporting requirements and all sorts of requirements that consume the time and resources of school systems all over this state. And isn't it about time that we recognize and, yes, rewarded,

rewarded those school systems, who year after year seem to be getting it right, seem to be doing it right, seem to be turning out students who are performing at a high level? Let's give them a reward

And what does this amendment say? Let's, at least, look into it? And isn't it most appropriate, most appropriate, to be in the context of education reform because, ironically, our towns and cities have been asking for this kind of help, relief from mandates, for decades. And we've talked a good game. We talk the talk, but we never walked the walk.

Now, with regard -- and how many times have I heard in this chamber, well, it's a well-intentioned amendment but, at this late hour, it could screw up the works, meaning that if the Senate hadn't thought of it, well, darn it all, we can't do it. Because if we do it, it might screw up the works. You know what? I have a feeling if we adopt this amendment, we're going to overwhelmingly adopt this bill. We can immediately transmit it as our rules indicate we must to the Senate. And based on their vote last night, it'll probably pass on consent.

So if we're really talking about education reform, as we should, and we're really talking about

helping those schools systems that need our help, which we should, then let's recognize in some small way, as this amendment does, those schools systems in Connecticut, those teachers in Connecticut, those administrators in Connecticut who are doing it right.

I would urge adoption of the amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Will you remark? Will you remark further on the amendment that is before us? Will you remark further?

If not, staff and guests please come to the well. Members take your seats. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber. The House is voting on House Amendment Schedule "A" by roll call. Members to the Chamber please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted?

Please check the board to see that your vote has been properly cast. The machine will be locked, and the Clerk will prepare the tally.

Will the Clerk, please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill Number 458, House Amendment "A."

Total number voting	147
Necessary for passage	74
Those voting Yea	51
Those voting Nay	96
Those absent and not voting	4

DEPUTY SPEAKER KIRKLEY-BEY:

House Amendment "A" fails.

Will you remark? Will you remark further on the bill that is before us?

Representative McCrory, you have the floor, sir.

REP. MCCRORY (7th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, just a few words.

So here we are after three months of deliberation, after three months of conversation back and forth between leaders, the public, educators, all stakeholders, and now we have the opportunity to make a decision on what we're going to do. I sat here and I listen to the debate, or the discussion about education reform.

And first and foremost, I'd like thank a few people. They'd been thanked earlier, but I want to make sure I say my thank yous to them personally.

First, I'd like to thank the most optimistic person in regards to education and education reform in the State of Connecticut, that's Commissioner Stefan Pryor. When I first met Stefan, it was a phone conversation, and he said he was going to be named the commissioner of Education in the State of Connecticut. And he said he was committed to changing the landscape of Connecticut as being the state that has the highest achievement gap to the state that we can continue to be proud of, the state that we know that has always been at the forefront of education.

And I said to him, Stefan, I don't know you, but you better put your seatbelt on because you're going to be in for a ride.

I'm sure he didn't know what that meant at that time but, as of today, I'm sure he has very good lesson.

I'd also like to thank Elaine Zimmerman. She has been extremely instrumental working with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus on literacy. You heard a lot about her earlier.

Elaine, I want to thank you very much. You get it.

I want to thank my colleagues on the other side

of the aisle, especially, Mary Guiliano and Senator Toni Boucher. They've been stanched supporters of education reform, and they've been committed to this issue and all the other Republicans on the Education Committee.

And lastly, I want to thank every mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, big brother, big sister, who understand and remind us every day that they understand the importance of a quality education for their children. They understand that a quality education is the equalizer of this country. It puts everyone on a level playing field. They keep us grounded. They keep me grounded.

You know, folks, every election cycle we go out and we talk to our neighbors and we talk to our community and we talk to our constituents and at the forefront of every conversation when we want to get elected, everyone in here can say that you say that you're going to improve the quality of education for your children. We all say it. I've been saying it for eight years. Some of us have been saying it for longer. And we get here and we serve and some of us serve on the Education Committee and some of us serve on other committees.

I can honestly tell you that for the last eight years, I've been on this Education Committee and no disrespect to anyone on that committee, before I got there and when I leave, but we have passed a lot of bills. We have done a lot of communicating, and I personally believe we have done the best we can, but I don't think that's good enough.

We have passed what I call Novocain legislation. It's the legislation that we pass that makes us feel good about ourselves. We can go back home and say I did it. I did something that's going to improve the quality of education in the State of Connecticut.

It makes us feel good but, then, that feeling wears off where we're confronted everyday and continue to realize for the past 20 or so years, we still have the highest achievement gap and what are we going to do about it.

The Governor spoke. He said this is the year of education reform. Well, let me talk you a little bit about education reform. There have been people reforming education for over 100 years in this country. I go back to people, like Prudence Crandall. She was a reformer; she stood up when it wasn't popular. Most recently, I go to people, like Thelma

Dickinson, who educated kids for a number of years in the city of Hartford and realized that she had to do it her way to be most successful.

Education reform affects communities differently in this state. I just heard that in some communities they have outstanding schools and that's wonderful. They're good. They're very good, and they want to become great. In other communities, the children and the parents say, God, please get me out of these schools, my child needs a chance.

I can honestly say when I wake up in the morning and I put my child in the car sometimes to bring him to school, I say to myself and I say to him, Boy, you're lucky. You're lucky because you go to very good school. You're fortunate enough to have a father that does pretty well and a mother that does very well, and you're going to be successful. You read on grade level.

Then I watched the beautiful young children that walk by me every single day. And some of them -- and I -- and some of them are going to a school that's outstanding. It's right across the street from my home. It's the best school in the state for children of color. And there's other children who walk right

by me, and they go to one of the worst schools in this country, not just in this state, but in this country. And I fear for them because I already can predict what's going to happen for their future. I could estimate and determine based on where they go to school what their future is going to look like. That's not good.

There's a grandmother, who takes the bus in front of my home after she drops her daughter -- her granddaughter off, and I get into a conversation -- the question from her every late summer before September.

Representative McCrory, is there anything you can do to get my child in that lottery? I want my child to go to a XYZ school, a lottery school.

And I say to myself it's a shame. It's a shame and a sin that a parent has to feel as though their child has to hit a lottery to go to a quality school and get a quality education. That's not how it should be in this state.

I want to thank my educators, my colleagues, yes, I'm an educator. Those hard working teachers that put it in everyday, that stay late and do everything they do everything they could possibly do to make sure

those children are in their class are properly educated. I thank my own teachers, when I was a kid. I know their names: Ms. Hallihan, Ms. Conover, Mr. Cross, who made it their business to make sure I'm properly educated, and they're probably the reasons why I'm here today.

Folks, Connecticut has a law. It says that parents must send their children to school. It's a law. And if you don't follow it, you'll be penalized. It didn't say you have to send your child to a great school, a good school, or a highly functioning school. It just says you have to send your child to school. And in this state we follow the law. As a matter of fact, if you get out of line and you make an attempt to not send your child to your district school that might be failing and make any attempt to put them in another school district where you feel as though they might get a better education, you'll be placed in jail. That's the law here in the State of Connecticut. That's the reality.

What we must do is change the reality for our children in this state. This is a start. It's just a start. It's a beginning. It took us a number of years to get in this position, and it's going to take

us some time to get out. I don't know if I'll be around when I can say every school in this state is a quality school and every child will get a quality education. I don't know if I'm going to be there, but I do know that, my colleagues, this year feels as though the bucks stop with us.

Folks, real quickly, I serve in the 7th Assembly District, in the North End of Hartford, zip code, 06112. It's probably the poorest zip code in the state. It's probably one of the poorest zip codes in this country. I read a report that we send more people from my zip code to prison in Connecticut than any other zip code in this state. That cannot be the reality any further. You can directly link the quality of education that the children are receiving in that zip code to the number of children of those who are incarcerated. The average reading level for a prisoner is third of fourth grade.

We talk so much about literacy and the importance of making sure our children. We made a policy statement this year said that every child in this state must be able to read. That is bold. I don't know if every other state has done that but that is bold. That says we get it. We know there is a

school-to-prison pipeline and we need it to end. That's what this legislation does.

To wrap up, I want to thank members on the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus. Especially, those who are on the Education Committee. Like I said I've been there for eight years and sometimes you can get lonely. You get lonely fighting the system. You get lonely banging your head trying to figure out how come they don't understand, but we have some new colleagues on that committee.

I want to say Pat Miller, Jason Rojas, Gary and Bobby, I love you. I love you for coming on and putting it the line for the children. I love you for the work you do, and I know when I'm gone, you'll still be there fighting for our kids.

So, in closing, folks, this is the end. And we'll probably going to support this legislation but understand it's just a first step. We have many more steps to go. And as we open our minds and open our hearts and start to deal with the reality that our children that exists for them in this state, I'm sure that we'll close this achievement gap. And I'm sure that the children that walk across my front yard and the children that walk your front yards will have the

opportunity to attend a quality school.

So that they will receive a quality education from a quality person that's standing in front of them, because all the research shows, all the research shows, it has nothing to do with poverty. It has nothing to do with your mother's education. It has absolutely nothing to do with how many times my mother, their mother, can go to a PTO meeting. It has absolutely nothing to do whether the home language, the first language, is English. It has nothing to do with that, but it has everything to do with collaboration. A strong leader at that school, an outstanding educator, and the collaboration and support of those parents. Those parents, who sometimes we complain about. They don't come to the meetings. They're not involved.

I made it my business to attend every public hearing, and I heard from parents that just -- they want a quality education for their children just like you want one for yours and just like I want one for mine. They want it and they send us up here to speak for them and that's what we do.

So when we press that button, it's a button of

change, not just for my child and not just for your child but every child in this great state.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Deputy Speaker Aresimowicz in the Chair.)

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Thank you very much, sir.

Representative Fleischmann of the 18th District, you have the floor, sir.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I must say it's a daunting thing to stand up on this floor after listening to my distinguish vice chair, Representative McCrory. As you all heard every sentiment he expressed came from the heart, came from personal experience, and I concur with virtually every word that he uttered.

And just to remind us all of what a small state we live in and how critical it is that we address the inequities that this bill is meant to address, I grew up right next to Doug's zip code, blocks from the blocks that he described. Just so happened that I had the good fortune to be in a district that provided

good schools. And Doug grew up in a district where there's some outstanding schools and some that none of us would want our children to attend because they are failing the children who walk through the doors.

And that's what brings us all here this evening to, hopefully, pass this measure before us.

You know, Representative Rojas, Representative Miller, Representative McCrory, I think did a wonderful job also of thanking so many of the people who made this bill possible. There are just a couple of critical people who haven't been mentioned who I wanted to make sure they got mentioned. They're the people who labor the same kind of hours we do or longer, generally without recognition, folks from the Office of Legislative Research, the Office of Fiscal Analysis, Legislative Commissioner's Office.

In the case of Education, John Moran at OLR, Sarah Borne at OFA, Alan Shepard there as well, our LCO Attorney Chris Cordima. I'm not sure he slept in three days. And finally, someone who is kind of known as encyclopedia brown, Judith Lohman, who happens to be celebrating her birthday today. And you can give her -- let's give her a round of applause -- appropriate but, perhaps, not fair that she should

spend her 39th birthday with all of us working on this bill as opposed to with her family.

You know, the reason why I chose to speak despite the fact that I had instincts pulling me against it after I listened to my good friend, Vice Chairman Doug McCrory, is that we've heard debate this evening on a bill that has 97 sections, 185 pages, and I've answered questions on virtually every section. And sometimes I feel like after that happens, you lose the forest for the trees, and I want to remind people of the incredible forest that is before us.

I've heard people refer to it as a nice step forward. It is more than a nice step it is giant leap that is long overdue. We have taken steps before, but we lacked the team that was prepared to go ahead to do what was necessary.

In 2007, we actually empowered the commissioner of Education to step into districts and schools that were in trouble and turn them around but nothing happened. We did not have the team that was required. Here, tonight, we have the team, we have the legislation, we have the will. And I'm very proud of all of the colleagues, of all the parents, of all of the teachers, all of the superintendents, the

administrators, the community leaders who came forward to say we need to this and we need to come together on this.

And so what have we got? We're expanding preschool education. We're focusing both our State Department of Education and our school district on reading skills. And though it's been said before I don't think it could be said enough the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus and the Commission on Children deserve tremendous credit for turning our focus to reading skills. If children learn to read by grade three, their life opportunities are wonderful, and if they don't they're part of that school-to-prison pipeline. And this bill starts to address that.

We have had failing schools for more years than I care to count. This bill creates a commissioners network aimed at turning around the most struggling of those schools, and we give the Commissioner the tools he needs to do that. We increased funding for the districts with the greatest need. They're lots of ways we could deal with funding, but we are focusing the dollars on the schools and districts with greatest need.

We are acknowledging alternative schools that

need our support. Our technical high schools, our vocational agricultural schools, our charter schools, and our magnet schools, all of them doing a great job for our children. All of them getting increased funds.

We are strengthening teacher preparation. More classroom experience is going to be required, professional development in reading instruction, a master's degree for someone who wants their professional certificate. And for somebody who wants to become a distinguished educator, a mentor to others, not only excellence in the classroom but additional training so that they know how to be mentors.

Finally, though it's just one part of the bill, teacher evaluations, sort of, and then tenure, what would happen when those topics became a focal for every one of us when we were approached by people from our district, by teachers, by school principals, by parents, by reporters. That was always the topic. We deal with it here, annual evaluations for teachers, annual valuations for administrators, using parallel standards developed in collaboration.

Those frameworks will be fleshed out, in

collaboration. They will be rolled out as pilots, in collaboration with districts. They will be linked to professional development so that if someone is found to be weak in one area or another, they are getting the support they need. They will inform the decisions that superintendents make regarding tenure and, yes, if someone is unable to perform at the level they need to and unable to improve after being given an improvement plan, they may lose their job, which is difficult, but think how much more difficult it is for a child was sitting in the classroom with the teacher can't get it done.

There are two critical elements to educational success: Great school leadership and great teachers. If we have both, were not going to get there. And I believe this bill puts us on that path. You know, in February, three months ago today, there was a major plan to put before us, Mr. Speaker, by someone standing right where you're standing, our great governor, Governor Dannel Malloy.

I was asked later, It's a short session, three months, you guys want to get out of here, you have other things to think about in an even year. What's really going to happen?

Well, I think that we've stepped up to the plate, and we've demonstrated that when we work together, when they collaborate, we get major things done. That's what this legislation represents. It's the beginning of a critical process that our Commissioner and our school superintendents and our school leaders and our teachers and our parents and our children will undertake together, but we've gotten the ball rolling with the right teams. And we need to make sure whether, Republican or Democrat, that we all stay committed to that team collaborative process that has gotten underway here tonight. It is truly a proud moment for me to service in this Assembly, to serve with such amazing colleagues. I hope all of you will join me in moving this forward to the Governor's desk or signature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Thank you very much, sir.

The distinguished minority leader, Representative Cafero, you have the floor, sir.

REP. CAFERO (142nd):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are certain occasions

in the chamber when one of our colleagues stands up and says words that are so sobering and so heartfelt that it is moving and defines the very issue. And I must say to my good friend Representative McCrory, I just had one of those moments, as I'm sure you did, when he spoke.

I want to congratulate, first of all, within this chamber, Chairman Fleischmann, Ranking Member Giuliano, all the members of the Education Committee, all the leadership that worked so hard with regard to this bill.

You know, I think all of us as public officeholders when we are asked, especially, that first election, what's the most important issue? I think we have said, since time in memoriam, education, education. And we meant it each time, we meant it each time.

But a lot of times and, unfortunately, over the years, sometimes it just becomes just a cliché just something to say because, though, we truly believe that our children are our future -- another cliché -- and that education is the key to success, the education is the key opportunity, education is the key to freedom, education is a key to better paying job.

Sometimes we get distracted with all other things.

I've been here long enough to have lived through several "Year of Education" education sessions. Sometimes we defined that through this Sheff-O'Neill panel; sometimes we defined that, in 2007, as pouring more money, as much money, historic amount of money into education. And yet, we realize through reports and statistics that we have in doing so well.

Yes, there are many wonderful pockets and towns and systems of education in the state of Connecticut, but there are some that are not so. And it is our responsibility to do everything we can to leave no stone unturned, to make sure that every kid has a chance.

I want to commend our Governor, who took an extremely controversial issue and put it squarely on our plate. It took a lot of guts. I applauded then and I applaud them now for doing just that.

Unfortunately, as the debate unfolded, maybe because of a poor choice of words, there was an attitude that developed that teachers, our teachers, were under attack. And I hope with the passage of this bill in its final form that the message is just the opposite. There is not a person in this room if

you were to name the three people in your life that were most influential that at least one of them would be a teacher. Most of us love our teachers. There's an old saying that says a person stands so tall that when he bends or she bends to help a child. And I know that the teacher the state of Connecticut and, frankly, this country and this world are some of the tallest people in the world.

I am blessed and proud to be the son of a teacher and later a high school -- middle school principal. A second generation Italian whose father was born of a man came who here from Italy with three days of education. But he knew enough to say to his sons in broken English, You got to go to school, you got to do your homework. Because he wanted them to do better and that vision is what makes America great, now each generation pushing the next generation to get that education to be successful and to do better.

And as Representative McCrory said, to think that in order for a child to do that, they have to come from that right household or have those parents that are involved, means to say if you see a kid that might not be so fortunate that we would give up on them? God no. We can't do that. This bill does many

things.

I don't want to rain on the parade of those who say it is bold and historic, but as Representative Holder-Winfield said, it's what we should been doing all along. There are many states that have done this, most recently, some have done it long ago. And for Connecticut, it's long overdue.

We want to make the teachers -- our teachers -- we focus so much on terminating them. How about making them the best they can be. And I truly believe that the provisions in this bill, at least, strive to do that. I truly believe that the provisions in this bill recognize there are different ways to educate those kids and that we are going to try everything we can to turn around those failing schools. To mimic and model those areas and schools of success so that every kid -- again, as corny and as cliché as it sounds, regardless of where they come from, who their parents are, the color of their skin, how much money they got in their pocket, when they go to a Connecticut public school, darn it, they're going to have a chance.

Is the bill perfect? No. We have more to do? Absolutely. It is a first step. It's a good step.

I want to thank all those who worked on it. And I want to thank all you because I know each and every one of us as a result of this bill being on our plate, went to our respective communities, our districts, we met with parents and students and teachers. I think we're all engaged in this one. This wasn't one where we said, well, will lead the Education Committee handle it. This was a biggie. I think we got this one right. Let's give it a shot and take that first step.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Brendan Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY (88th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think nothing creates an eloquence more than unanimity. I think the words of Representative McCrory, Chairman Fleischmann and the Minority Leader have said most everything I would say, and I think in a very eloquent fashion. And the only thing I would add is a thank you. A thank you to all who participated in this debate and in the formation of the bill that we are about to vote on.

Specifically, I want to thank all of the advocates, all the advocates who had and felt a stake in what we're doing today. As the Minority Leader pointed out, perhaps -- perhaps, because of some ill-chosen words, we set on a course, perhaps, of ill-will that -- that created a sense among our teachers that, perhaps, they were under attack. And I'm here to say, and I think I can say this along with the Minority Leader and, perhaps, everyone in this chamber that teachers are not the problem. Teachers are the solution.

I thank the teachers unions and all the teachers in the state of Connecticut who spoke up, had their voices heard, and enabled us to make a better bill. I want to thank those who are involved in the education reform movement because I think their voice needs also to be heard. I think they have something valuable to offer, and I think we need to give some measure to the notions and the ideas that are out there that can help turn our schools around.

I want to thank the business community who has made it clear to us over the course of the last couple of years, if not soon -- if not longer ago, how critical our system is to the economic development

future of our state. We are not producing graduates from our public schools who will lead and bring our state into the future that has to change and, perhaps, that's changing tonight.

Of course, with all those disparate interests, with all the different parties who expressed a voice regarding this issue, it was a very, very difficult process to bring those voices together in a way that enabled us to celebrate the bill that we are going to vote on tonight.

And I think, perhaps, more than any other, this is something that I've shared with my caucus on this -- on this side of the aisle, but I think it needs to be said to the public. I think in -- in bringing together those disparate voices, there's no one play greater role than our Speaker. Our Speaker played a critical role in bringing together those different elements who were, at times, fighting; at times, not talking; at times, reaching a complete impasse in their ability to break through on the critical pieces of this bill that really we all agreed on, but for different reasons and from different perspectives, it was difficult for them to break through. And I believe in my heart that if not for the leadership of

our Speaker, those disparate voices would not have come together. We would not have the bill that we're voting on today, and we would not be celebrating an achievement that all of us recognize.

So I thank the Speaker, in particular, for his leadership on this bill.

I urge you all to support it.

(Speaker Donovan in the Chair.)

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Will you remark further?

If not, staff and guests please come to the well of House. Members take their seats. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber. The House taking a roll call vote. Members to the chamber please.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted?

Please check the roll call board. Please check the roll call board to make sure your votes were

properly cast.

If all the members have voted, the machine will be locked. Clerk will please take a tally.

The bill passes.

Clerk announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill 458 in concurrence with the Senate.

Total number voting	149
Necessary for passage	75
Those voting Yea	149
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	2

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The bill passes again.

The Chamber will stand at ease.

(Chamber at ease.)

(Deputy Speaker Aresimowicz in the Chair.)

DEPUTY SPEAKER ARESIMOWICZ:

Are there any announcements or introductions?

Representative Kirkley-Bey of the 5th, you have the floor, madam.

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THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I move all items on Senate Agenda Number 3, dated Monday May 7, 2012, to be acted upon as indicated and that the agenda be incorporated by reference into the Senate Journal and the Senate transcript.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so order, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Madam President. There is a single item on Senate Agenda Number 3, Emergency Certified Senate Bill Number 458, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL REFORM. Would ask the Clerk to call that item.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill Number 458, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL REFORM.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Good morning Senator, Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Good morning, Madam President.

Nice to see you.

THE CHAIR:

Same here.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Although I know we'd all rather be home in bed sleeping, but we have important work to do right now.

THE CHAIR:

We sure do.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

But it's an honor and a pleasure for me to move this bill. And so with that, I do move the emergency certified bill.

THE CHAIR:

The motion is on acceptance and passage.

Will you remark, please?

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Yes. Thank you. It is -- I am moving it for acceptance and passage.

Ladies and gentlemen of the circle, we have a really unique opportunity this morning to make meaningful education reform with the bill that is in front of us.

It's a 185-page document that has a variety of information in it, but most importantly it has opportunity for our children. And before we -- before I begin discussing and explaining parts of the bill, I did want to make a few personal comments, if I may?

The bill that's in front of us is the handiwork of so very many people, many of them are here in the Chamber this evening and some of them are down in the House, and I first, for the record, want to take the Governor, Governor Malloy, for challenging us to embark on reforming our educational system.

I'd also like to thank Senator Williams and Senator Looney, Senator Harp, Representative Walker, my cochair Representative Fleischmann and Senator Boucher, who had many, sort of, quiet conversations about education. And the members of the Education Committee themselves, they really contributed to this bill and so it is a true collaboration. And this bill would not obviously be here without hard work of people, who behind-the-scenes and so I would like to thank Ellen Scalettar and Manny Marisotis and Eleanore Michael and Rick Molita from Senate and House staff.

And of course the folks who advise the Education Committee have worked long and hard, and have lost a lot of sleep to make sure that we get to this point and I would, as well, like to thank Judith Lohman and Chris Cordima, John Moran, Sarah Borne and Alan Shepard for their hard work.

You know, as I said, we have an opportunity to begin the lengthy process of reforming our educational system here in Connecticut. And as we have from the start we all know this is about our children, our children who need opportunities that a good education will provide for them. And the sad truth is that our current system has failed too many of them. And so over the past few years we've made changes to the curriculum in our schools. We've attempted all kinds of sort of small fixes thinking we could do that. And some of that really because of federal law and CLB pushed us in a certain direction. But we've not attempted something as sweeping as this bill, but I also want all of us to understand and remember that we cannot be lulled into thinking that once we do this we're done. Once we pass this bill -- and it's certainly my hope that that happens -- that our job is finished in the Legislature -- I would like to say this is really just the beginning.

This is important to our children and their families that we restore the reputation, the very good reputation of public education here in Connecticut. You know, we were always considered a state that had the best education, but over time as socioeconomic conditions changed in Connecticut, our schools did not keep up with the needs of our children. We have a large achievement gap as we all know. We reference it

frequently and that achievement gap is about pockets of poverty, lack of appropriate housing. We have language barriers and flat budgets due to the economic downturn that we're all still dealing with. And we have not really prioritized education in our state and in our towns.

So as we all want to see our children succeed, every single one of us, we also have to remember that this bill that's before us is a reflection of the different ideas as to how to make that happen. You know, I have read numerous opinions written by a variety of well-respected educators that say it's not just about the teachers, but it's about great principals that create great schools because they set the standard, they set the tone of the school building and we need to focus on recruiting great principals and superintendents. And as we do that, we will rely on them to help recruit great teachers here in the Connecticut. You know, we do have wonderful teachers. Some are better than others, which is true in any profession. And in this bill I think we've recognized that.

We have decoupled teacher certification and evaluation from tenure, but we've also strengthened the process of evaluation. Our teachers want to be part of the solution and I believe that this bill does that and because it calls for collaborative processes. We respect teachers and administrators and their ideas based on their experiences in the classroom and schools. And so we cannot throw that aside. We have to have everyone at the table to create extraordinary outcomes.

And so as we discussed this bill over the next couple of hours, we have to -- I think we should remember these things, that the importance of what we're doing and the importance of making sure that everyone that wants to participate can have that opportunity.

Thank you for indulging me for a moment. I appreciate that.

The bill that's before us does make many changes in education statutes and programs affecting early childhood education, school and school district

operations and funding, teacher and school administrator qualifications, performance evaluations, it discusses tenure and the termination process. It also discusses the duties and responsibilities of the Department of Education and the governance and operation of our Connecticut technical high school system. Can't forget that they are part of this bill as well.

You know, this bill gives us a great opportunity to utilize the talents of our new commissioner, Commissioner Pryor. In turning around our low performing schools, which is certainly the most important factor of this bill, it gives the commissioner the authority to require change in up to 25 schools over the next three years. It does limit the nonprofit private entity management or governance to six schools and it also precludes any private or for-profit school management or governance in our network schools. These turnarounds schools will be considered network schools.

They will, as I stated before as we want to continue this collaboration, it respects the collective bargaining process while allowing these turnaround schools, these new models to work to help our children succeed. And as we respect those collaborative processes, it also allows for, if necessary, arbitration of contracts to occur and dispute resolution in an expedited manner. The bill also provides the really first opportunity we've had in many years -- and I've been in the Legislature for many years so I'm well aware of some things we've not been doing and that we should have been doing. And one of them is focusing on early childhood education.

We know how important it is to mold those little minds that are running around and doing, and learning. Everything they do is a learning experience for them. And so the fact that we can now fund a thousand new early childhood slots or opportunities for our children, I think is wonderful as we start to embark on quality preschool education here in Connecticut. The first 500 will be in our education reform districts, which are our lowest performing districts; 250 will be at the remaining priority -- former priority districts and 250 it competitive districts.

We also, which is different from the Governor's bill, will be creating ten new family resource centers. It gives us a chance to bring families back into the schools, because for so many, we know that the involvement of family is so very important to children learning. And so I believe that those ten new family resource centers will help to bring families back to school. And we're also requiring 20 new or expanded school-based health clinics to also be in those education reform districts.

We're also looking at what we can do in this bill in terms of literacy intervention and the bill adds five schools for literacy intervention program, again, with the priority in our network schools. The Department is going to have to develop reading assessments to identify reading deficiencies in the K through 3 students. And we're going -- the bill also requires two of the next for charter schools that will be developed over the next couple of years or three years, to focus on dual language theme.

In terms of our ECS formula, which is mentioned in this bill, but really is -- we all know it's really an important factor in our budget. There aren't any changes to the formula. We have a ECS task force that has yet to complete its work. It's completion date is October and that task force will make recommendations as we work on the budget the next biennial budget. It's my hope that those ECS recommendations that will be developed will be factored in to the next biennial budget. And we also have an Achievement Gap Task Force that has to complete his work shortly. And so those two task forces, I think, will create further opportunity to build upon this bill.

We're going to create alliance districts, which are the 30 -- the lowest 30 performing districts. And within those, we're going to identify the lowest ten performing districts. That's what's going to be called the "education reform districts." Charter schools will receive some more money under this bill, not quite as much as the Governor had hoped, but they will receive some monies. It will be -- excuse me -- the same as what was in the education -- the bill that came out of the Education Committee. There will be an

increase in the per-pupil grant for the coming year and then a $500 increase in fiscal years '14 and '15. There will also be some small grants for non-Sheff magnet schools.

You know, one of the things is we talk about reforming education, it means providing the best teachers that we can and a way to do that is to now provide opportunity for professional development, especially in reading. And so we're requiring the commissioner to establish a teacher professional development program in reading instruction. The master's degree that so many of our teachers have, I know I heard that from teachers as I met with them in my district and here at the capitol, so many of them have master's degrees, even though it current law all they had to have was 30 extra units beyond their bachelor's, but it didn't necessarily have to be in a particular area of learning.

So now, we're going to require that if a teacher wants to achieve a professional certificate, to have a relevant master's degree in their sort of area of cognizance that they teach. And then we're going to build upon that and encourage these really good teachers to seek a distinction of being a distinguished educator. That designation, of course, brings responsibility to those teachers. If they so choose, they can become a distinguished educator and they can -- they would have to take some additional coursework beyond their master's degree, but it would be an opportunity for them to also mentor other teachers and help the teachers in their schools or school district to become better teachers.

As we think about preparing our teachers, there's also a section in here on student teaching. You know, up until now teachers who were in undergraduate programs and going through their course of becoming a teacher only had to student teach really in one semester. Maybe they did dabble a little bit in a second semester before they spent that last semester student teaching. Now, we're going to provide opportunities through our teacher prep programs for classroom experience in four semesters. I think it's very important as we educate our teachers that they determine if teaching is what they really want to do,

and I think if you could get them in the classroom more often than we do now earlier in the education process, then they can make an informed decision as to whether they really want to be a teacher. Is this the profession for them?

Also I think I stated before, we're going to have professional development that can focus on increasing student's knowledge as well as their achievement and refine and improve effective teaching methods. When it comes to tenure reform, which I know we've all been talking about, it revolves around evaluations. Frequency of evaluations, teachers remarked quite often that they weren't evaluating. They could go two or three years without an evaluation. How do you know how effective that teacher is in the classroom if they're not being evaluated? Or if the evaluation is biased in some way. Because that was certainly something I know many of us heard. So we're going to require an annual evaluation for all teachers, and as a matter of fact, for all principals. And that for those teachers who are evaluated as being exceptional or be -- or needing improvement, we're going to require that an outside validator validate that particular evaluation.

We're also -- the commissioner is going to embark on a pilot of these evaluations. As you know, there is this new PEAK process that has been talked about. We want to see if it's going to work, if it's effective, and so we're going to require the commissioner to administer an valuation program in eight to ten districts for the 2012 to '13 school year. And in those eight to ten districts, it's not just going to be in one school type of school district in the state. It's to be spread around so there's -- we know if the evaluations work in an urban district, in a rural district, in a suburban district or any combination thereof, and I think that hopefully will be very effective. And then have UConn through the NEAG school analyze and evaluate this new evaluation process.

We are changing the length of time to attain tenure to four years. If you are a good teacher you get good evaluations. And four years you can achieve tenure. There is no automatic granting of tenure. You have to

earn it and those evaluations to inform tenure decisions have to be based on effective practice. And that obviously is where our school boards come into in terms of what they consider effective. Also we shortened the hearing length and evidence time -- actually the hearing length for a notice of determination physician. If it teachers determined to not be an effective teacher and they have already attained tenure and for some reason they're not doing their job properly, then from the time that the teacher has been notice that there is a determination -- termination decision on horizon, we have shortened the length of time it would take to go through that process to 85 days. The hearing process will be on -- the hearing subject matter will be on process as well as substance. It won't just be limited to process. It will also include whether the evaluations were determined in good faith, whether the ratings were reasonable in light of evidence that was presented. And then we are adding a new ground for dismissal and adding ineffectiveness to our statute as a ground for dismissal.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's sort of a short synopsis of what's in this 185-page bill. There are some really good things in this bill and I believe that this bill is a very fine piece of work and something that we can all be proud of as we move forward. Because we, not only have a chance to build a better classroom through better teachers and administrators, but we also will be focusing on those classrooms those -- excuse me -- those children that are really desperate need of having the best education that the State of Connecticut can provide for them.

So with that, Madam President, that is my statement. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? There's a second that -- I've been asked to wait for a second and I'm sure she'll come right back, though I'd love to call for the vote, roll call vote, but I won't do that. I'll wait. Could have been the fastest bill we've had all year. Here

she comes.

And I think I might call on Senator Boucher about now.

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Madam President.

And for such an important bill, I will even expose my red and infected eyes here for the evening in due respect.

I rise to comment on his very important bill and to also commend the very hard work on so many people's parts, but particularly the chairs of the committee and particularly our Senate Chair Andrea Stillman that I know this was a rough road to hoe. And there were many on both sides of the aisle that's been quite a bit of time talking to various constituents, to various groups that were here that's been a great deal of time working with us on what they hope would be a landmark reform.

And I have to tell you that starting the session it was something that I commented on starting in January and I'll just give you a little tiny retrospective. From the commentaries as I saw it in my mind's eyes as we were starting this process. In January 2012 -- we often are asked to comment on what we think the next session is going to present us with by the various news outlets where we reside. And I commented that the beginning of this legislative year was filled with hope and prospects for meaningful change in our educational system. And as we looked to the new year, there's no question there are deep divides in the Legislature on the 2012 budget and the tax policies that continue to disturb many of us today on different side of the aisle.

However, it's with some measure of optimism that I started the year looking forward to the 2012 legislative session, and I felt at that time it should be a year of agreement and teamwork on one of the themes that drives many in public service in this building and also certainly on the part of our

distinguished President of the Senate, as well as the Chair of the Education Committee.

I would like to see the General Assembly and administration set aside their differences for the sake of our children and folks intensely on education reform free from constraints of various interests and I think that that's -- as happened to some degree. Certainly, the emphasis and energy has been expended. And I hope, too, that we resolve our differences in doing everything possible to seriously address the largest-in-the-nation achievement gap, which none of us like to be labeled within our state. And work relentlessly to have everyone of our children reach their full potential.

We need to send a strong message that we care about our children's intellectual, mental and physical well-being. Our youth are our best resource and represent the future of our state and only two letters he can one truly participate in our system of government and contribute to our economy. I think we all have that in mind when we've been dealing with this issue.

And at that moment in January of 2012, I hope to look back on the year and -- and to feel that Connecticut in the residence of Connecticut would be proud of this General Assembly of the administration, they have the courage to take on the meaningful changes necessary to raise our educational system right back up to Number 1 in the nation, which is something that some of us have been very, very proud of. A month went by and it was February, 2012. We're about to embark on a new session. And our realtors would meet with us prior to session to talk about their points of view and I felt and what about the fact that I think that they're a good barometer of the economy's health. They know why people move in and move out. They are sort of like the canary in coal mine to let is no what's going on. And as our national headlines proclaim our high taxes and bonding downgrades; made their selling of our state a little bit more difficult. The one competitive advantage that realtors point to has always been the State's top ranking in education, but not until recently have things changed.

So in an effort to regain that competitive advantage some 350 educational leaders and reformers attended what was an education workshop here in Hartford that was focused on initiatives to seriously address the widest-in-the-nation achievement gap. And our new education commissioner, who is just becoming know to members of the Legislature and to the public at large, known as an education reformer. At that point, we weren't -- we didn't know him as the kind of person and the kind of personal passion that he has for the position and his ability to reach out to everyone and the kind of a welcoming persona that he has.

Added that particular workshop, there were six guiding principals that the administration had put out and that was enhanced early education, underperforming school intervention, expanded access to high-quality school models, cutting red tape and teacher evaluations and tenure, and restructuring school finance. So it's kind of interesting to look back in February to see where we are tonight with this bill.

Those breakout sessions included those from low performing school districts, excellent leaders, teachers and school finance panelists at the forefront of educational reform. They all talked about increasing instructional time, longer school days, longer school years, funding for all types of school models and research-based models, various financial incentives for teachers, community involvement, corporate sponsorships and the like.

There was also presented some good models around the state, particularly the New Haven school officials presented their model and they also brought it to our Education Committee this year as well. Their major component was an evaluation by the principal, vice principals and others in November and rated on a scale of one to five. The union leaders there stressed that process must be one of continual education and performance group rather than I gotcha by administrators and that has been taken to heart. We've heard that a lot as we've gone around the state. Tenure reform was proposed by superintendents. That was also discussed. So it was quite an important meeting with a lot of important issues brought on the table.

On February 9th, the Associated Press reported, Hartford, Connecticut, that Governor Dannel P. Malloy's call for teacher tenure reform could become one of the trickiest measures to work out during the General Assembly's session as lawmakers delve into details of how and when these educators should be hired or fired. Several legislators said Wednesday and Thursday that they seek bipartisan support for most of Malloy's education reform package and the State's two largest teachers unions agree that the job guarantees system and evaluation process in their profession are ripe for improvement. Now, as lawmakers start parsing the proposals and hearing from constituents, both sides are pledging to keep the lines of communication open, but cautiously watching each other will push for something that the others can't stomach. I thought that was very interesting and telling.

There were further news reports of different groups coming forward. There was the very newsworthy combination of groups that came together. The group of six, they were called, putting together an education reform package of their own that combined public school superintendents in Connecticut, CBIA, ConnCAN, and diverse other stakeholders that also put out a package of proposals that got widespread attention as well.

On February 24th, the small district consolidation these of the -- piece of that proposal became very controversial and news reports alerted and alarmed some of these districts because it would penalize them for serving 1,000 students or less and that these districts would have state education grants withheld if they spent more per pupil. Delving further into that issue brought some ideas forward that translated to some compromise language that I fully support that's in this bill and speak to it, the consideration of the input by some of the districts with regards to some of this language.

On March 12th -- we're getting close to where we are today -- I was reflecting on the fact that Connecticut has the deepest and widest achievement gap and that too many, as has been mentioned by our Chair,

low-income students are trapped in failing schools and that there's great pressure on the State to enact far-reaching educational reforms coming from Washington D.C. Now, it should come as no surprise that recent town hall forums -- and some of us did conduct quite a number of them. Given that I have seven towns, I had one in almost every town and some of the towns one to two or three once they got wind what was going on, how important it was to their communities. Most of the questions, even though we are talking about the entire state budget and other issues, education became the number one topic and really became quite animated. And the professional organizations would come to these and would reflect and remark about their concerns and fears with regards to this. Some of them would say, I came to this community because I love this community, but I'm very concerned about these proposals. You've all heard from them, especially be more closely responsible for test scores. What if my administrator doesn't like me and a high school teacher said that she finds it troubling that student performance while a heavily on teacher evaluations because a number of factors outside the classroom can affect a student's performance.

It's interesting because each of these comments have been dealt in some way, have been listened to and I think the language has evolved and changed based and a number of these concerns. And other teachers said, I teach and feel so incredibly vulnerable. An administrator could hire two new teachers for one veteran teacher. That's what worries me. Why are administrators given so much power? And how will school librarians, and art teachers, and psychologists fall into this educational reform and how do you evaluate them?

I know that you've all heard from others that have made the same comments to you. So changes in teacher's certification, tenure and evaluation that have been mentioned the most were the ones that got the most feedback and controversy and the four rating standards and weights within the new evaluation system were discussed over and over by various teachers in the profession in our towns.

Another point of concern, which I thought was well handled here and you saw different language or that their concerns into consideration, I think about the tens of thousands I spent on my education going beyond a master's. I'd like to be assured that that would be waded into how I'm evaluated. As I said, many if not most of these concerns were addressed as this version of the bill was drafted. This draft of the bill does continue to weigh a master's degree. In fact, it requires a master's degree for a distinguished educator designation.

At one point in this whole process, the Governor made a statement that I think resonated with a lot of us, especially those of us that grew up during the Civil War -- I mean the civil rights, era, although at times I feel I was born in the Civil War era -- but the civil rights era, imagine that he believes that others that the civil rights issue of our time is education, particularly for our disadvantaged youth. In some ways, some will feel that this Education Committee bill that was passed later on took a little bit of a step backward. And now, this bill may take us a little bit forward as well. That the issues that were ever increasing a problem, was issues such as removing barriers from other states and teachers being hired here. That seem to have a lot of agreement, increasing early childhood education slots for priority districts, I don't think there is a person in this entire Legislature or even in the State that this -- would disagree with this particular investment and this bill substantially addresses that.

It increases grants for charter schools and non-Sheff magnet schools, but there were other issues like the evaluation process and master's degrees and admissions to preparation programs, tuition reimbursement and so forth that was still left outstanding. And many asked again and again, and they may even be asking right now, what is the sense of urgency that we have to move this bill right now so quickly? Why couldn't we put it off to a special session or another session in a long session? Some feel, along with the administration, and I would have to concur that we're already a decade too late, that we're losing too many of our young students and some forever and we've lost important ground.

Two out our most disadvantaged students drop out of high school and the number grew in the last year. Connecticut was once the number one education state in the country. We fallen to Number 14 and continue to drop. More than 30 states have enacted significant reform including our closest neighbor Massachusetts, which has far surpassed us in national standing. The federal government's Race to the Top grants has been ordered to the states and rewarded them financially. Rhode Island's receives more than $800 per student and her -- New York and Massachusetts get approximately 350 to 400 dollars per student. Connecticut has only received $7 per student.

These funds have helped states enact new programs and initiatives that prepare their students to compete in a global world, but Connecticut has failed to receive these funds after multiple applications, and not certainly for the lack of trying, but always pointing to the fact that we have not really dealt with serious education reforms. At one point in this process, even I thought maybe this education reform package was on life support, and at that point, still we remain hopeful, hoping that elevating educational quality would still be a priority in that something would happen.

On April 5, 2012, the Education Committee was embarking on looking at the original bill to be proposed and they came up with a different version and brought it out. The bill unfortunately at that point lowered support for charter schools that our bigger cities strongly supported. And many were concerned the bill would really force these new models into fertile territory in our neighboring states that are choosing to expand them and make them feel more welcomed. It also removed a good portion of the commissioner's network tools and changed a lot of the other languages and put a lot of it into studies, but I believe that a possible veto could have brought everybody to the table and made everybody think about this long and hard and renegotiate once again, so that it brings us to this point in time as late as it is in the evening.

For some of us, we feel strongly that the profession

of teaching should be elevated and compensated well, and that that message should be stronger and stated more often. After all this field is preparing our next generation in our society for a better future and it should be on par with their most highly paid professionals for Connecticut's educational system to succeed and our urban schools to close the gap all our stakeholders must endeavor to work together. And I think that at the end of the day that's what we'll find once we conclude this night's business.

And as I said before, there are many changes in this bill that took into consideration the valid concerns of teachers who, in fact, bear the great responsibility of our educational systems. And administrators, though, however, will also carry a very heavy burden to demonstrate that they can observe and evaluate their staff fairly and honestly. And for me, I think the tipping point because quite honestly, there's much in this bill to like and dislike and that is true, I guess, in the art of compromise. Neither side is comfortable with all aspects of the bill, but for me, the tipping point to move me over the line in supporting this bill, in addition to the enormous amount of effort that it took to get here, were two aspects of the most significant and may do the most probably -- and you probably won't be surprised to see what I've have chosen. But I believe that they will do the most to address our achievement gap that is the new school readiness spaces and sections dealing with early reading readiness, that the Black and Latino Caucus worked so hard on moving forward.

We all know that school readiness is incredibly important, early childhood. There's expert testimony that was presented to us. And you know how much I like the science of learning and the science of health and the science behind some of our policies, but there is a large body of science that does show that there is a rapid brain development in children from birth to three, especially in the first three years. We know that the architecture of the brain is shaped by early experiences and that these early life experiences are translated to neural connections which in turn influence child development. Our experts came to testify to say that children are born with all their neurons already formed; however, the synapses between

those drugs are established after birth, peaking at age three. I wish I had known that when I was raising my three children back then, that by the age of 15 half of these synapses are lost through the pruning of unused neural connections to the lack of environmental exposure; whereas, those synapses' pathways that were stimulated are strengthened. If we want to develop strong readers we need to encourage and facilitate positive early experiences so that synapse passages are stimulated and strengthened.

Another important point is that reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for literacy development and eventual success. However, currently fewer than half of parents, 48 percent in the United States read to their children daily, which translates into 35 percent of our nation's children entering kindergarten without the basic language skills they need to learn to read.

So studies show that children entering kindergarten may have as much as an eight-year gap -- imagine that, an eight-year gap in vocabulary even before they begin school and that is because a child who has not been read to aloud may have a limited vocabulary of a two year old while a child who has been read to aloud everyday may have a vocabulary of an eight year old. It is truly remarkable. So all of us I'm sure support heartily the additional doubling of the preschool slots than in the original bill and it addresses -- and in that process was substantially strengthened.

The other aspect that leads me to support this bill is House Bill 5350, which has been incorporated in this bill to a large extent which would have universal literacy by the 3rd grade as a goal which substantially improves it. It's well known that by grade 3 student learning is a prediction on the ability to read. And if a student isn't reading at grade level by this time his or her school career, it becomes increasingly unlikely they'll catch up with their peers.

Connecticut must emphasize reading curriculum and student literacy through the 3rd grade and beyond. And adopting a research-based state reading program that includes early identification and intervention

will substantially help these children through in -- that have an adequate reading instruction because if they do they fall behind certainly going forward. And it's well known and we've been presented -- many have already recounted that are correctional facilities actually do their census and future planning for how to expand their facilities do to the actual reading competency of their third-grade students.

I'm going to conclude my remarks because I know many have much to say about this, but it is, believe it or not, the most significant issue for me, although you might not have guessed that from earlier debates that we've had in this last week.

Now, will this bill provide the kind of performance that will improve the prospects for all children, no matter their income level? Increase respect for teachers and elevate teaching? Only time will tell in the federal government will that the state know if it agrees that we've taken the right step in the right direction with much-needed education dollars that Connecticut failed to garner in the past.

Again, I'd like to express my appreciation to the enormous effort expended by so many groups at all levels that have worked tirelessly to bring forward many well-thought-out proposals. A commissioner, by the way, that is so obviously dedicated to educational quality -- and I might add, and to a Governor who recognized his talent and passion, to my colleagues who care so deeply for our children, we may disagree on methodology, but not on the outcome we wish to achieve.

My unusual journey to this General Assembly started with my local board of education and state board of education service. And as such, this journey for me to this chamber has always been about education. As an immigrant child of poor and uneducated parents, who spoke no English they formed my values, goals and ethics from a very early age. Their daily message was that education was everything, that it was the way out of our poverty. It was the path to freedom at all levels. Further, their respect, amazing respect that they showed us for teachers and the teaching profession was impressed upon us every day. They

believe as I do that teaching is the noblest of all professions.

We have been known to often say that we run for office to make a difference. Would I've learned and many others I hope is that making a difference is extremely elusive, that there are very few real endeavors that truly make a long-lasting difference. There's only two places where we have a real fighting chance. That's in the home and in the classroom and if the home fails a child -- and there's so many homes that do in our state -- there's only one place left and that's the classroom. How important is that? Six hours out of a day or longer. As such, a teacher assumes society's greatest responsibility as an enormous influence on a young person's life.

The future potential of our children in the workplace must increasingly compete on a global scale and they depend on these teachers. That is why Raymond Neag made the largest contribution in the country to a school of education when he donated $21 million to UConn, not to the school of engineering from which he graduated and made his fortune, but instead to the school of education. Because he understood, like most of us do, that they laid the early foundation for his success.

Teaching is very, very hard work, and I know everyone in this Chamber is grateful to our teachers and thanks them.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark? Will you remark?

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President. I do have a few questions for the proponent of the bill, and I'm trusting you'll be able to facilitate this discussion quickly.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

SENATOR WELCH:

If I may, Madam President, through you?

Madam President Section 6 t refers to elementary endorsed teachers taking a reading instruction examination.

If I may, through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed.

SENATOR WELCH:

What is that examination?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

Would the gentleman kindly repeat the question. The acoustics are very strange in this room and it sounds differently to my right than it does to my left.

THE CHAIR:

It does.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

And so I have to listen a little more closely. So if he could kindly repeat the question, I'd appreciate it.

Through you.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President.

Section 6 requires a reading instruction examination to be taken, it looks like every year. One, I want to make sure that I reading that correctly that it is every year, and two, if you could just enlighten me as to what that examination is.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you. Through you, Madam President.

That is correct. Each local and regional board of education will annually report on those exams that are taken so that we can keep on top of professional development and reading.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President.

And turning to Section 11, which is page 8, lines 223 -- excuse me -- 228, talks about grants for technical assistance and regional cooperation. What exactly are those grants?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Through you, Madam President.

Are you referring -- did you say line -- starting at line 238, sir, of the bill.

SENATOR WELCH:

I'm sorry, Madam President.

Line 223 to 228, Section 11.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President, Section 11 is referring to grants to support school districts in developing plans to maintain and improve educational quality. The grants are to be used for technical assistance or regional cooperation and the appropriation for that is a $100,000.

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President.

And if I could jump ahead to page 73 of LCO 5186 line 2334, where we talk about the different charter schools. As I read that section, 2334 to 2341, it references four charter schools within five years, but two of those have to be dual language schools, if I'm reading that correctly. And I'm assuming this probably isn't going to be a problem, but what if the demand for the dual language schools are not there and we don't get those expected applications? What does

that do to the total number of charter schools in the first five years?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

Through you to Senator Welch, it is certainly our hope -- because they have several years to put this project together -- you know, we know that there's a great need for ELL students to receive the best education they can, dual language arts academies have pretty good track records, depending of course on the curriculum that's developed. But I know I have it in my area of the state. And this will be a challenge for the commissioner. And we know -- he knows by putting in in this bill that it's a very important project that we would like to carry forward with. Certainly, if he has conditions that he needs to share with the Education Committee as to the difficulty in doing that, I'm sure we will your about them.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President.

And I guess if I can simplify it, if the two dual language charter schools do not materialize, does that that preclude the state from moving forward with four charter schools?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President, as I said, I believe the Commissioner would have to report to us as to why that cannot be achieved and if he -- if the report is credible then we will reassess it at that time.

Through you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President.

And then, I guess, Madam President, through you, on page 123, I'm looking at line 3977 where we reference the term that Senator Stillman discussed earlier as "ineffectiveness." But I see that we also maintain incompetence and I guess that leads me to question, Madam President, what is the distinction if there is one between "incompetence" and "ineffectiveness?"

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President, you know, the evaluation of our teachers is rooted in the opinions of our school boards and it is up to them to determine what is incompetent or ineffective.

It is purposely not defined in statute, and through you, Madam President, we thought it was a good idea to continue that tradition, so to speak, of not defining it because of the autonomy of our school boards and it has been defined elsewhere in case law. So there's

all -- there's another way if you need some -- if a school board needed some assistance in out of define those words, they could certainly refer to case law.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Thank you, Madam President.

And then if I could direct Senator Stillman to page 181. And in particular, I'm looking at Section 92 Subsection F where we discuss special-education endorsements and kindergarten to 6 certification.

And if I recall not too long ago, I think we had a bill in this chamber -- I believe Senator Bye brought it forward -- that talked about that. And I'm not sure if there's an inconsistency here and if there is, is one bill in intended to supersede the other? Or maybe there's no inconsistency.
It's late and I'm having a hard time recalling that prior bill.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

I'm sorry, Madam President. I was trying to find the page. It's a very cumbersome bill. If the gentleman would kindly repeat the question?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch, would you repeat the question?

SENATOR WELCH:

Sure. Absolutely.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

SENATOR WELCH:

I believe just a little while back we were dealing with a bill that adjusted the certification with respect to kindergarten to 6 and the endorsements that were required as a result of that. And forgive me for inartfully asking this question, is this section at all in conflict with that prior bill? And then if so, how would that be reconciled?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President. No, it is not.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Welch.

SENATOR WELCH:

Okay. Thank you, Madam President.

Thank you, Senator Stillman, for that. I think there's a number of good things that this bill does and attempts to do and I think there's, obviously, some things that a number of people struggle with including myself.

I think I would be remiss to say that I guess one of my biggest challenges right now is where we are. It's 2:30 in the morning and, you know, we just received this final draft. I haven't had the opportunity to take it back to constituents, vet with them, get their

input, hear what they have to say about it.

And in a lot of ways this is what I think a lot of people complain about with respect to how things are done here in Hartford or in a parallel way in Washington D.C. I made a comment with respect to the same-day registration bill not too long ago, that people seem to be disinterested in politics because of us. And although I truly appreciate a number of the initiatives put forward here, I think our constituents would appreciate it if we could take this back, talk to them some more about it and come back here and have a vote tomorrow or the next day even.

So thank you for the time, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Thank you, Governor.

There really is no bill in the 2012 session that's interested me more than this bill. School reform and jobs are the greatest challenge for Connecticut in this decade. I -- just so you understand a little bit better about my background and perspective, in the late 1960s, I was a noncertified reading teacher in central Harlem and used as my textbook the autobiography of Malcolm X and found that it really turned on those young students in central Harlem. And then in 1977, I was elected to the New York State Board of Regents. The regents in New York are a legislative body of 15 people. They meet three days a month in Albany and they have responsibility for all the standards for public and private schools, colleges and universities among other things. And we did major school reform in the board of regents. I served on the board for 23 years and it within my public service life -- that has been the longest public service I've had, was on the New York State Board of Regents for 23 years.

And that's -- when I looked at this bill, I immediately saw some great things that it's doing. Investing in a thousand new slots in early childhood education is exactly the priority we should be doing. Adding 20 new school-based health centers which I've been to, terrific, terrific step. Instructional audits of the 25 lowest performing schools is a wonderful start. The K to 3 reading program is excellent. At the same time -- and by the way, I congratulate you, Senator Stillman and I know -- you're my officer close by -- I know how hard you've worked and your staff worked on this. At the same time, I want to tell you from the perspective I have that much of what's done in this bill is as Senator Stillman said just a beginning. It's a good beginning, but it's a beginning that's played, played well at the edges of school reform.

And I want to just set out briefly, and then I'll sit down, a few things that need to be done as we move forward with school reform and these are major priorities. I don't think, for example, from my background experience that we will ever end the achievement gap between urban and suburban students unless we have a high school graduation standard.

Without a high school graduation standard, each school, particularly urban schools, will do their own thing and we won't make it. I was so impressed recently by the statement by the superintendent of schools in New London, Nicholas Fisher. Maybe some of you saw it. He said -- I'm just paraphrasing, but he said a basic benchmark of academic achievement, namely a standard for graduation is glaring in its absence from this bill and what that says about our expectations for students in Connecticut. He goes on to describe -- he says, Connecticut, unlike neighboring New York and Massachusetts, lacks achievements standards for graduation. How can we say that we're committed to a world-class education if we don't require students to be able to read, write and do math as a requirement for graduation? He goes on to point out that basically already we require to get a high school diploma in Connecticut is 22 credits without any demonstrated competence in reading, writing and mathematics. This has got to be part of the new part we build on, you know, from the current

foundation.

And the bill also deals only with one of our achievement gaps, as I testified before the Education Committee. It deals with the interior achievement gap that we haven't Connecticut between urban and suburban students, but it doesn't deal with the other major achievement gaps, the achievement gap that we're increasingly facing between Connecticut and the other states of the United States. The fact is that in the last ten years we have fallen dramatically in Connecticut and we're now ranked about 25th in the country in many subject matters at many grade levels where before we were ranked in the top ten.

The other achievement gap, major achievement gap is between schools in the United States and those in other parts of the world. And we have fallen dramatically again. How do you -- how do you really address those kind of achievement gaps? You address them by a rigorous curriculum and a rigorous assessment system and this bill does not address either curriculum or assessment.

Third, you address achievement gap by rigorous standards in teacher colleges. This bill does address performance of existing teachers, training of existing teachers, but it really does not address the curriculum of teacher colleges and making rigorous standards and having young people graduate from teacher college really prepared to go into the classroom.

And fourth, this bill does not address school financing although it relies on the task -- we can have a task force to do that, but school financing is a major part of school reform. We as a State -- I don't know if you've seen the data, but we, as a State, rank very, very poorly and what we contribute, we, the State, contribute to the public schools versus what our communities through the property tax contribute. We need a major revolution here with respect to a state contribution and recognizing the priority of public education.

One of the fundamental financing errors of Connecticut is in special education. Special education is a

mandate of the state and federal government's and has been a mandate of the federal government for many, many years from the 1960s. And yet, we, in our communities through the local property tax, pick up most of the cost of special education.

And then finally, I want to just say that school reform must have a good governance system. We have no statutory qualifications for the commissioner of education. He comes to us unlike most states without a teacher certificate, without a school administrator certificate, well-educated man with whom I've met at some length, but I'm concerned because under this bill he is given the authority to require change in the 25 worst performing schools in Connecticut in the next three years and he also is required to establish a teacher professional development program in reading instruction. That -- to do those kind of things, to take over the 25 please performing schools to do a professional development program in reading takes tremendous professional expertise. We have a commissioner under our law who has not been in the classroom, except as a student himself. He has not been a school administrator either.

His feather in his cap is that he was a cofounder of a charter school movement and that's why in the first iteration of this bill you saw so much with respect to charter schools. We need to prescribe qualifications to be commissioner of education, as we recently did to be Attorney General of Connecticut, basic qualifications. And in the next session of the Legislature, I would like to work with the Education Committee on doing that as well as the other measures that I think will show that this is indeed a good beginning, but there's much that we can build on.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Markley.

SENATOR MARKLEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Let me take a moment to tell the insomniacs of Connecticut what has happened here today in reference to this bill. We have several different press conferences expected throughout the day at various points as the final negotiations were taking place people this together. And in the end, the announcement was made, I believe, by the Governor down the hall a little after 11:00 o'clock.

I was handed the bill in the caucus room next door just after midnight, 185 pages on what most of us will agree is the most important issue that we face here this session. And in a matter of, oh, maybe an hour or two, we're going to vote on it. And I can't believe that anyone in the state of Connecticut thinks that's the way we ought to be doing business. It's the kind of story that when you go back and tell your constituents they just shake their heads. And the scene outside at the press conference was a scene of congratulations. I said, well, it must be great bill. Everyone in the room was happy. They were happy because I didn't know what was in it.

You read the story in the Mirror or the News Junkie or whatever it is basically people are saying I can't wait to go back and read it. You throw a party and everyone gets happy for a few minutes. It's not surprising. The hangover will arrive tomorrow when they look at and they find out what's actually in the bill. I haven't seen such celebration since we saw the certificates of merit last week.

You know what this is? This is the vampire legislation. A bill emerges out of a backroom after midnight and it passes through the Senate before dawn and the debate never sees the light of day and it is no way to do business. And every one of us knows it and yet we put up with it. Well, I won't put up with it. I won't support this bill and decided I wasn't going to support the bill before I saw it because I knew when I saw it, I wasn't going to know what I was seeing anyways, because I'm tired and I don't have time and it would be responsible for me to pass something this important in this kind of situation.

Why don't we take this bill as it stands back around the state and see what people think about it? Why

don't we give them time to appreciate it? Why don't we give them time to criticize it? Why don't we look at it and come back in a special session this summer with this file or in January? You know why we don't do it. Because it's a House of cards and it will fall over with the first small breeze that hits it, so we have to pass it fast.

Is it all bad? It certainly is not all bad. This is one of the pains about this bill. Many people with great talent have worked very, very hard on it, and many good ideas have been incorporated to it, but it has -- and there's general agreement about certain aspects of it. What I don't understand is why we don't pass the parts of it that we all know are good. We hear reference again to the childhood reading initiative that I heard Representative Holder-Winfield discuss on the Appropriations Committee. I've rarely seen a concept that felt such quick and unanimous support. Why don't we do the things that seem could go back and do more things that seem good and keep working on the question of education instead of saying, we're going to pass a great big gigantic education bill. The danger of it is there won't be another great big education bill.

The people that say this is a start, this is a start and finish because we'll cross education of the agenda. The big bill has been done and it will be years before we get back to it. It's a mistake. I'm sorry to see us functioning this way. I know the pressures that are on all of us that lead to it. With all that work that was done, the people who are not doing their job are us because our job is to exercise proper oversight and we can't do it in the time frame that we've been given.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. Will you -- okay. I saw Senator Harp first. I'm sorry.

Senator Harp, I saw you first.

SENATOR HARP:

Thank you, Madam President.

I rise to support this bill and to commend the Education Committee first for taking on this great initiative of our Governor to make Connecticut come into the 21st century of education and educate all of its children and to address the achievement gap for once and for all.

And as I sat here thinking about what that means to me, as an African-American woman, I remember the debates that happened right after slavery in the African-American community in this country, the debates between George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington. And the question then was whether or not we should have a talented tenth of African-Americans in this country or whether or not we should put our resources into educating everyone and giving them skills. Well, as we fast forward to where we are today, we recognize that any technological knowledge-based society we can no longer ask -- educate just the talented tenth. So that that debate can no longer be raged, and yet, we are raging it. Because a lot of what we talked about this year was to say that we will take 1 percent of the dollars and have a school system that is pretty much privatized and really forget about the other 99 percent.

What this bill does is to saying that we are going to think about everyone and we're going to face the fact that we live in a knowledge-based economy and that all of our children have got to have an educational system that educates them and prepares them to not only live in this knowledge-based world that we live in, but to prevail and that. Our country depends upon it.

We are a very different country than we were when I was in high school. We were certainly a very different country than we were during the days of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver and W. E. B. Du Bois. And we are now a country that relies upon knowledge that relies upon creativity and if you deny those to a certain segment of our population we are denying our ability, as a country, to actually prevail. This bill takes us down a road that we need to go down. It recognizes that we have

got to educate all of the children, not just the special children who get into good schools because of the lottery. But we have got to be committed to all of the schools and all of the children.

One of the things that we learned on appropriations when we said that we were going to do results-based accountability -- and I know that everybody sort of glazes over when we say that -- but we said we should have a goal, a policy goal that all children are healthy and ready to learn by five and fine by nine, and basically, what that meant was that by the time they're nine everyone will be at goal for the CMTs. And what we learned was why aren't our kids reading? They aren't reading because we don't have teachers in our schools who know how to teach reading. This bill for the first time addresses that so we have a K through 3 reading program that demands that the teachers that are teaching our kids to read know how to do that.

There's evidence now, evidence-based practices that we know work to teach children to read. Perhaps they didn't know that back in our day. We are basically saying that like companies, that there will be an evaluation. I'm a supervisor and every year I have to evaluate my staff. And there are goals and objectives that have to happen. We're just saying in this bill that that will happen for teachers. That is a good step forward. For the next charter schools, we're going say that we're going to recognize that we live in a world where people speak a lot of different languages. In my school system, there are over 80 languages spoken.

And wouldn't it be nice if we, in America, were like some European countries where kids can speak more than one language? And so the next charter schools will be dual language charter schools preparing our children for the real world that they live in. This bill is a first step, but it is a bold first step and it is a first step on behalf of all of our children.

I want to commend our education chair. I want to commend the President Pro Tem of the Senate and all of you who've worked upon this bill. It is going to take us farther than we have ever been and I am proud to

support it.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Madam President.

Good morning.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning, sir.

SENATOR WITKOS:

I don't often rise and speak on bills that don't originate out of my committee, but I thought bill tonight or this morning on this bill.

When he first version came out and Governor Malloy went out on his education tour and held town hall meetings across the state, I felt compelled I should probably do the same because initially they weren't local to my area. So I did five of my own. And actually one of them I was upstaged by the Governor, which was okay. So I was glad he came out to Torrington High School and had a chance to hear from the folks up there. And when I was leaving that night they asked me if I was rescheduling for myself to come back because they still wanted to talk about the bill. And so I did. And I had the opportunity to speak to hundreds of educators over the course of a couple weeks and how they felt about the original bill.

And then I received hundreds of e-mails regarding the bill that came out of the Education Committee, and unfortunately, I know that the product before us today is a combination of the two; however, I did not have the opportunity to read the entire bill. I'm not a member of Congress. I don't believe in let's vote on it and find out what's in it later on. I started reading through the bill and I got to page 61 and I

think there's a great things in it that others have spoken about so eloquently, but I also found a couple troubled areas that I felt.

And I had a couple of amendments drafted. I'm not going to call them because the reality is there not going to be voted on in the affirmative here, but I'm just going to explain to you two of the things I picked out in my amendments just in the short and 61 out of 185 pages.

One of them is the schools are encouraged to try to save money, and then if they save money while maintaining the quality of education, they can receive additional grants. Well, I wanted to make sure that those additional grants were not counted against a school and the minimum budget requirements because we are almost penalizing them in that sense. I thought that was an important amendment to bring up. And the other one was the bill requires us to align our financing and our accounting through the business office as to how much money comes in and out much money goes out, but every municipality might do their financing a bit different. I know my hometown of Canton we do our capital expenditures through the board of finance, our local board of education asked to report that out in a separate accounting and wanted to make sure I was offering the amendment that if the town -- there's no state monies coming back for reimbursement then that would be exempt from that because we can't put a one shoe fits all out of 166 boards of education in the state of Connecticut. It's just not going to work.

And there's some other things I felt that there -- that mandates that come down. I would like to have talked about is a bit more and participated is a bit more in the debate. And then lastly, I'll close with the school governance council. Imagine if you were just elected to a local board of education and you were in a low performing school district, they have a school governance council consists of five parents, two community members, five teachers, a couple nonvoting members, if they decide to reconstitute the local board of education, they can do that by affirmative vote and that your next local board of education meeting the board has to take up that vote

and if they vote otherwise or against that motion, the commissioner of education will come in and he'll make the ultimate decision whether we're going to go with a reconstitution of the board through the school governance or follow with the local board of education. So a board that's been elected by the representatives of that community, that vote can be overturned by a simple vote of the board of governance by employees and by five electors in a town and I don't think that's right.

So Madam President, unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to read the bill and I can't be supporting it tonight.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you, Madam President.

First of all, I want to begin by congratulating and thanking Senator Stillman for what was I know probably a pretty much thankless task and certainly an overwhelming task.

At the same time, though, I do want to express my protest, if you will, about voting on what is the most important the most important piece of legislation to come out of this assembly in a decade and having the final draft passed under our noses only an hour ago or so, I just think it's unfair to put legislators in that position. I can't change it or do anything about it, but at least I want to put on the record that I object to it. I think it would have been much better if we had the time to really digest this 185-page document before we vote on it.

Having said that, I do have a few questions, if I may, through you to the proponent?

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President to Senator Stillman. On page 22 there's a section, now Section F, basically, it talks about the State Board of Education Monitoring the progress of each school or district designated as a low achieving school or district, et cetera, et cetera. And then it says "if a school or district fails to make acceptable progress towards meeting such benchmarks or fails to make adjustments and adequate yearly progress, that the board of -- State Board of Education after consultation with the Governor and chief elected official may request that the General Assembly enact legislation authorizing the control of the district be reassigned to the State Board of Education."

I mean, if I read that correctly, only one school could be failing in a school district and the board could be taken over by the State Board of Education potentially. Is that an accurate understanding of the way this is drafted?

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

Through you to Senator Suzio, that's existing law. That's not new. That's the first thing. It's been reorganized a little bit and includes a school -- or a district fails. It previously was just the entire district.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Right.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

You know, what I think this is doing is saying to school districts that you should keep track of every single school in your district. If there is a problem with one school, and that school fails, the students there fail to make adequate yearly progress and then I think really believe that the section would be doing is sort of saying we're giving you two years to get that one school in a position where it is making adequate yearly progress. Or it is possible the State Board of Education, through the commissioner, could make that decision to come in and help the district make the decisions they need to make.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you.

And through you, Madam President, and so the word "school" was added as new language and so it does seem to potentially trigger if only one school fails in a district. For example where I am in Meriden, we have a dozen schools, a couple I schools, three middle schools and eight elementary schools. Theoretically, one school could be failing at the board would be at risk of being taken over the way I read this section.

Another thing that is a concern to me is the emphasis put on the evaluation process, which I think is appropriate as far as, you know, evaluating teachers. But my concern is just a much that is going to add in the way of administrative cost. Again, in my hometown district of Meriden, there's about 700 teachers. And you know, commencing a new process of evaluation for each of them on an annual basis may add some significant cost to administrative fees. And the bill at this point in time -- at least what I detect from what I've been able to read -- doesn't provide support for the added administrative costs that would be imposed on the district. Is there any kind of potential financial relief in the bill to cover the extra administrative cost related to teacher

performance evaluations?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

Through you to Senator Suzio, they are supposed to be doing that now, and if they are not doing it, they should. If there are costs incurred, I would be very surprised because that should be covered under their existing budget, any evaluation costs that are necessary. I don't, you know -- an evaluation of a teacher or a principal means -- it's obviously a cost of time and some paperwork and making sure that that evaluation is up to date and appropriate and in that individual's personnel file. But we don't anticipate there -- don't even think that there's anything in the fiscal note that anticipates a cost to a school system.

We have to remember in the very large school systems, many times a principal will designate another individual who has a position of authority in the school to help out with those evaluation. So that possibility is still there. We're that putting it solely on the shoulders of the principal because we know a large school could be a challenge for a principle to evaluate every single teacher and that they do need some help. So the existing process should not incur any new costs

Through you Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you. And through you, Madam Chair -- Madam President, to be good Senator.

I want to make certain I understand "tenure" as it's in this bill. My understanding is tenure, once earned is retained unlike the Governor's original bill as I understood it, which would be earned periodically. Is that a correct understanding?

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President, "tenure" in this bill as has been written is that after four years of good evaluations a teacher could be granted -- should be granted tenure. If they are offered a position in that fifth year, then they would be granted tenure. Up until that time, they are an at-will employee.

"Tenure" as you know is a due process. If a teacher has tenure and their evaluations fall off, then the administrator can step in and help mentor that teacher. If the teacher still doesn't do well through the mentoring process, then a termination process can begin. And what we've done in this bill, as short in that length of time for dismissal of a teacher is a teacher challenges that dismissal. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you.

So, again, I just want to make certain I understand correctly, though, tenure once earned under this proposed bill would be retained in so far as the dismissal process is concerned.

Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Through you, Madam President.

Tenure is retained if you continue to perform well. You have to prove yourself; otherwise, you could be dismissed as long as that dismissal process follows the due process law.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO:

Thank you, Madam President.

I have no further questions for the proponent. I will just say, again, first of all, thank you, to her for her hard work. And number two to express my disappointment that we weren't given more time to study this in detail given the importance, the magnitude and complexity of this legislation. Be that as it, may I will be supporting the bill tonight. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark?

Senator Bye.

SENATOR BYE:

Thank you, Madam President. Good morning.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning.

SENATOR BYE:

If ever there was a bill worth staying up for, this is it. I want to start by thanking Governor Malloy and you, Madam President, for your leadership on this issue and for putting this issue front and center in Connecticut. It's really taking a long view. It's a short view because kids deserve the best today, but it's the long view because we're in deep trouble as a State if we continue with 40 percent of our students not making it at a level where they can be productive members of our workforce. So I thank you for that short view and long view. I also want to thank Don Williams and Senator Stillman and Senator Harp for their hard work and -- on this bill. They all got very deep into these policy issues to assure that this bill would reach the goals of improving outcomes for students.

I'm really proud to stand here and support this bill, but like most of my colleagues here in the Senate I also need to thank my constituents because without their input this bill would be what it is. The Governor had a bold proposal and our job as a legislative body was to go listen to our constituents which we did on the Education Committee and in the Senate. And it's a better bill for that reason.

I think there were some questions about why, why? Why is so much focus on the teachers? And I think part of that is because each one of us can remember member a teacher who changed our life. And once you're a parent, each one of us is incredibly grateful for what a teacher did for our child and we see that the quality of the classroom is so intricately linked to that teacher. So reform should naturally start there and that was a big part of the reform and a big part of the improvements, I think, in the bill and the enhancements of the bill in making sure that teachers are value weighted appropriately, that the evaluators have training.

That's why teachers -- it's because we've had teachers we've loved and we know they changed our lives. And we've also -- some of us have run into teachers who maybe we didn't think were the greatest. So I think

that's why the focus was so much on the teachers and why we heard so much from teachers and that's where we looked first, but that's not the only place reform looks. And again, the initial bill was good, but I think it was approved because of some of the add-ons because we started to look at things besides teachers and besides supervisors that could make a difference.

One of the things that the Governor focused on that a number of my colleagues have talked about is a focus on early childhood to make sure that students arrive ready to learn.

Another focus that was added was on family resource centers, and if any of you have family resource centers in your district, you know that they have helped teach parents about school, help parents learn how to be better parents and they're also a great resource to teachers about how they can interface with parents. And give parents the benefit of a doubt, because sometimes I think teachers are a little bit hard on parents. Sometimes they need a little helping hand and the family resource centers really do that.

And in addition, the school-based health clinics looking for other ways that we can support children's other needs. The increase in ECS funding and the ECS task force are imported. So I just wanted to point out that I think this bill is stronger than when it started because of the input that we got from the community. Today Arnie Duncan came out with a quote that said successful school reform will only happen with the collaboration of teachers and I think that we've seen that. They've been a part of this process and they've had important input.

But this bill also make some changes and gives our commissioner some powers to try those 30 schools that have been really, really challenged for many years. I don't know about other members here, but I've spent a lot of time and priority districts and classrooms and in schools. And I can tell you that it's a huge, huge challenge and I think some of them really do need to start new. And this bill helps that happen and that's really important I think for success.

And I want to close by just saying that this is an

important step as many people around the circle have said, but I've tried to all session point out that the underlying issue of poverty in the state and the wealth gap has so much to do with the achievement gap and that's about doing some of the things we've been working on. That's about getting jobs, having good paying jobs for parents and good jobs for students when they come out of school. It's about children having stable housing and families having transportation to jobs and to school and it's about having good health, all those things impact education.

And so we're looking at education reform and doing all we can to help the children and we have to do that, but we have to look at in the context of poverty and do all we can, as a Legislature, to help folks lift themselves out of poverty.

So with that, Madam President, I am happy to support the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator MacLachlan.

SENATOR McLACHLAN:

Thank you, Madam President.

I stand tonight to share my frustration. And that frustration frankly is, as Senator Markley had stated, that so much is expected of a legislator, especially a legislator who is not part of the Education Committee. And when we have to study extra hard on legislation before us when we are not part of the committee that crafted the bill, it's that much harder. It's that much more work. And when we're asked to do that in 90 minutes, it's unacceptable.

So I've listened intently to the comments here tonight. I want to thank Senator Stillman for the work of her and her committee and others in the circle who have worked hard on this bill and I respect very dearly advocates who have worked very hard on this since the Governor's address back in February. But I

must say that we, as a Legislature, have all been very hopeful about education reform. I felt that as I've been working all through this session, that we are all hopeful that we could have true education reform that is bipartisan.

And this legislative process tonight is the worst experience of a lack of bipartisanship that I hope never to see again should I have the distinct honor to serve my constituents in this body. The way that this bill came forward in this evening was atrocious, absolutely unacceptable. And it's for that reason and that reason alone that I have to vote no. Because I have to get input from my constituents, they're my boss, not you. My constituents reside in Danbury, Bethel, Fairfield and Sherman. And I've met with teachers and superintendents and taxpayers and people who are concerned about their schools, parents. And I've talked to them time and time again about education reform.

But I can't talk to them about anything that's in this 185-page bill. I can't talk to any of them.. They're asleep, where we should be thinking about this legislation for another day. And so reluctantly, I vote no, knowing that there are some good elements of this bill, but I don't know what they all are. And the worst part is I don't know what's not good. I reluctantly vote no and I hope and pray that this legislative body will stop operating the way you're doing it tonight.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Kane, you owe me on this one.

Senator Kane.

SENATOR KANE:

Thank you, Madam President. I will be brief.

I actually did not think I would stand up and speak on this bill, but after listening to Senator Markley and Senator Witkos and Senator MacLachlan I have to agree

with them. The Governor said that he made this part of his platform back in February and this was going to be the education session. Yet, as I stand here, we were given this bill at close to midnight on Tuesday, May 7, in the Governor's very own press release just taking it right off of here, it says that this is a very complex issue and the final bill will be well in excess of a hundred pages. It's actually 185 pages. So there's a chance that there is language in the bill that will need to be fixed. The Senate President and the Speaker of the House have given me their word that whatever mistakes will be corrected. So here we are on Tuesday, May 7th. Admittedly from the Governor's very own press release there are mistakes and there's like which that needs to be fixed, yet, we're expected to vote on it at this late hour.

So I have to align my remarks with Senator Witkos, Senator Markley and Senator MacLachlan. However much I would love to support education reform and real education reform, I believe this will process has been flawed.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Crisco.

SENATOR CRISCO:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I rise to support the bill, but I want to just speak briefly in regards to the governance council.

When my children were growing up and I lived in New Haven, I chaired the first school governance council in the City of New Haven. We were responsible for hiring the principal, the teachers and because we were a satellite school, we didn't have sufficient funds for art and recreation. And we went door to door to raise the money for the program and also hire the teachers. That is an excellent like a part of the

school system and one should not be you know, fearful of it.

And as I heard my colleagues speak I could not help, but look at the Emerson quote on my desk, do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

And we've been very fortunate with Governor Malloy, yourself, Madam President, Senator Williams, Senator Looney and Senator Stillman. We have begun to blaze a trail. No one expects it to get done, you know, so quickly even if we had a whole year to work on it, but the most important thing is we have started. We have started to blaze a trail and I think that's what we should all be proud of. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Frantz.

SENATOR FRANTZ:

Thank you, Madam President. I appreciate that very much.

The greatest concern I have about this bill has to do with the process which has been described before by numerous Senators and I think those are legitimate concerns. Mainly because, Madam President this side of the aisle represents a little over a third of the Chamber. And to not be included in the process and to not be included in the reading of the bill until literally 45 minutes before we were expected to be out here on the floor is not democracy at its best.

But in addition to the process I think most of us were bothered by and I'm sure some of the people on the other side of the aisle might have questions as well, this really was supposed to be the education year. The off·year is supposed to be for the budget. Make some tweaks. Figure out a way to cover a budget deficit if one does evolve. And we haven't really focused on that. I know that's in our immediate future.

But since that wasn't going to be the focus of this particular session, it was made very clear that this was going to be the education year. I think every single person in this chamber got excited about that, when we heard that was going to be the subject of the session because we all have our opinions. We all know that Connecticut has the greatest achievement gap. Many of our constituents became very excited about the issue.

I had one in particular, Steve Simmons. Most of you have heard of Steve. If you haven't, sure you will announce to distant future. Steve spent the last two years, thousands of hours and thousands of dollars of his own money to come up with a report to address this squarely. Why does Connecticut have this achievement gap problem? How can we fix it? Came up with a great blueprint. I wasn't unable to e-mail him until midnight tonight. Obviously, too late to get him. I know he's going to wake up a very disappointed man tomorrow to know that this bill was passed and what the language is in it.

There are good parts of this bill. There's no question about it. There are other parts that I think just come up far too short of where we had originally hoped them to be in this final language which looks like it's about to be voted on. Charter schools, great part of the bill. No question about it. Does it go far enough? Probably not, but it is great to see -- great to see recognition of a model that does, in fact, work and it works legitimately and it works in some of the most difficult challenge areas in our urban areas within Connecticut.

We know that dollars don't necessarily make that much of a difference and, in fact, that can exacerbate a difficult situation and I think that that's probably true in this bill, that because there isn't a huge amount of money going into it, but just a modest amount, it may recognize that it may not. I, you know, I don't know. But I do want to say this, I know we can do better. We shouldn't be in the business in any subject area of throwing pennies in the Grand Canyon. We should be going all the way to make the necessary reforms that we need to do in education.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Roraback.

SENATOR RORABACK:

Thank you, Madam President.

I think Senator LeBeau was quicker to his feet, but you were glancing my way.

Madam President, I think the irony is it's so late. All of us are so tired. Everyone wants to go home, and yet, no one wants to not be on record expressing their frustration with the reality that the signature of issue of this legislative session is dropped on our laps in the middle of the night without the benefit of the public knowing, understanding or commenting on the important work that we're doing.

Madam President, I don't want to repeat everything that's been said and I won't, but I do want to record to reflect that when the bill was put in my lap it was warm, it was literally warm coming off the copying machine 185 pages. And as I peruse the 97 sections, there are things in there that made me very happy. There was more money for vocational agricultural education, which has long been a poor stepchild in Connecticut's educational financing system. And there are other promising reforms that I know are the product of a lot of hard work on the part of Senator Stillman and others who have been privileged to be in the secret chamber where this bill was massaged and developed and refined.

Madam President, it doesn't speak well to us institutionally that each year that passes the rank and file members of important committees like the Education Committee, I believe, Madam President that you were once the distinguished House chair of the Education Committee, if memory serves me right. And when you're House chair of the Education Committee,

Madam President, the committee played a much greater role in fashioning, understanding and responding to important pieces of legislation.

And as this institution evolves, it moves away from public input. It moves away from sharing ideas widely, gathering feedback. The feedback that this bill receives will be after the deed is done. And to the Governor's credit and your credit, Madam President, you travel the state with a proposal that's not in front of us. What we should all be doing is traveling the State with a proposal that is in front of us.

And so I just want the record to reflect that the no vote I cast is cast because of our dereliction, our collective dereliction of duty and no matter how good the contents of this bill may be, in my view, the end can't justify the means by which we've arrived at this product. The students of Connecticut deserve better. The teachers of Connecticut deserve better. The parents of Connecticut deserve better. All of us deserve better, Madam President and for that reason I'll be voting no.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator LeBeau.

SENATOR LeBEAU:

Thank you, Madam President.

My remarks will be brief, mercifully. And that is in contrast to my history as an educator. I have been a teacher for -- retired five years ago and I was a teacher for 37 years in the public school system in Worcester, Massachusetts and most notably in East Hartford, Connecticut. I worked in alternative schools which are the precursors to magnets and charters, and actually founded the most successful alternative school in the Northeast, a program called Synergy in East Hartford.

During that period of time, I've seen so many educational fads come and go or movement -- you could call them fads. You could also call them movements. Back in the early seventies, it was all about the whole child, and as we moved into the later seventies, I remember all of our books turned green because we were all into ecology after the first Earth Day and things began to change. And then we were concerned under Ronald Reagan about work. Everything had to be infused. Work was infused in all of our curriculums. So there has been -- and I could go on right up to the present day. And lately, it's been charter schools and magnet schools. And I think all of these things have some good that they bring to the table.

And what I just rise to say is this: I think this is a really good bill. I think it has broad appeal. I don't think it's full of fads. I think its got solid substance and it. I'm particularly impressed with the emphasis on reading, pre-K education, the continuing education for teachers.

And I -- you know, when I first saw the Governor's proposal and I spent a couple of meetings with my local boards and teachers with the commissioner, one in East Hartford and one in South Windsor, I thought that the proposal that was given to us by the Governor was much too narrow. This proposal is comprehensive. It is probably the best education reform package, the best educational bill that I've seen, and frankly, before we arrived, the best educational bill since the mid- or late eighties when is the Legislature passed the Education Enhancement Act and made some really good attempts at improving education. This is a good comprehensive piece of legislation. Is the press is perfect? No. But neither are we. The process is never perfect in this building.

So I recommend this and I endorse it. I want to thank those who worked so hard on it, the leaders, Senator Stillman, chairman of the Education, Don Williams in particularly who had real leadership and I saw Don reading all these education books and I said Don what are you reading that for? Well, to figure out what some of the philosophies behind some of the reform movements were.

And Toni Harp. I think her being there was noted in our caucus, her being there an understanding the fiscal ramifications of the different parts of the bill are very important. So I endorse this. I endorse this comprehensive educational reform. I think it's going to be good for our schools. It's going to be good for kids. It's going to be good for education in the future.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Fonfara.

SENATOR FONFARA:

Madam President.

Madam President, I rise in support of the bill and before I add my brief remarks to this debate, I'd like to direct a couple of questions to the proponent of the bill, Senator Stillman.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR FONFARA:

Thank you, Madam President. And Senator Stillman, two questions for you. If you have a network school in your district, what happens when there are regular contract negotiations for the entire bargaining unit and are the changes in the newly-negotiated collective bargaining agreement enforced for all teachers including those in the network school? Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN:

Thank you.

Through you, Madam President, just quickly, the employees are still part of the bargaining -- and so the new contract would apply.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Fonfara.

SENATOR FONFARA:

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Senator Stillman.

Madam President, as I said, I rise in support of the bill and I would like to also recognize Senator Stillman for her tremendous work on this, Governor Malloy. And Madam President, I, too, like a number of us in the chamber remember in the House when we served there, your leadership on the Education Committee, Senator Williams, Senator Harp. As an urban legislator, I'd like to thank Governor Malloy for making education a priority in this session. And while many of us can find something that makes the original version of the bill something that we might have questions about, I, for one, am grateful that the Governor has enabled so many different organizations to come to the table and weigh in on this final crafting of the bill; educational advocacy groups, private corporations, teacher unions, parent groups, the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, educational experts. All having a chance to shape this legislation.

I, like Senator Bye and others, look to the early childhood education aspect of this bill, the reading by third grade, family resource investments and additional dollars for the lowest performing schools. And as the Governor has said, this is the first step. And in fact, the success of this bill will not be measured by how many green votes are up on the board tonight, but, in fact, it will be by the number of students from some of the school districts that Senator Coleman and Senator LeBeau, and as I thought about my remarks, I looked around the circle and I believe that most of us represent at least one school that is considered underperforming in this state. And

so this is a not democratic issue or a republican issue. This is an issue for all of us. And whether the children that occupy the seats in those schools will be able to enjoy the benefits of a quality education that so many in our state enjoy. And I am hopeful that in my vote tonight that I will be joining you in saying, yes, this is the first step to giving those children the same opportunities that so many others have today.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

SENATOR CASSANO:

Thank you, Madam President.

I think Senator Roraback hit it on the head. It's a significant bill and I think we all want to be part of it so I will, too, try and be brief. I want to clear up a couple of things that people might have questions about. You know, why is the bill so late? We got the bill, most of us, the same time because we have confidence in the committee structure and the people who serve in those committees. Just like each of us serves on committees and we work and we finalize a bill and we bring it forward. I served in local office for 28 years and I'll bet for 26 years of those years I was out here at midnight for the last night of the session. When the budget was being passed at midnight and you started at probably 7 or 8 o'clock, when major bills were being passed at midnight when they were doing implentors across the hall at two and three and four in the morning. That's the process of the building.

Sometimes maybe we're too ambitious. Sometimes you feel left out. Twenty-six years in local office, I was in the majority for 26, but I was the Minority Leader once for two years and that was a learning experience and so I can understand, but let me make it clear for the one or two who are watching us live, maybe, the reality is that we have all had faith in the people that spent time to put this bill together.

Input: Tomorrow, May 8th, will mark three months since the Governor proposed his bill. We have been getting input from our constituents for that entire period of time, for almost 90 days. Most of us have spent time in small meetings and large group meetings, answering e-mails and so on, and the dominate thing for these last 90 days has been this particular bill. I've also had the pleasure to be executive director CGEF(sic) for ten years. Many of the things we have talked about over the years, most people in this people, no, you're exaggerating, can't be. I think we learned about the education process, the system across this state and the deficiencies. And what this bill does is it helps us address them and move forward.

I know we'd like to be on the bill. I wish we all were because this is -- this is the opening, the opening to a new future of education and I think it's been just a terrific masterpiece to be able to keep the three systems that we have in place, systems for funding. The changes that we need are being addressed in both the tenure process and in the evaluation process. It's just a great first step and I'm very proud to be a part of it.

And finally, I want to say most people out there will never know how much time the people who put this bill together put in together; last weekend, this weekend, many days during the week, Saturday, Sunday, morning until night. This isn't something that just happened. This is something that really took a love of education and a work ethic that gives us this wonderful bill. And so thank you for all that were participating.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, speaking, of course, in support of this bill. First of all, in terms of process, I

think, again, followed in a way what happened last year. The Governor began with a bold and aggressive process to meet a crisis in our state. And of course, we know the achievement gap is probably the greatest crisis threatening our future. And his initial proposal has been enhanced, refined and improved by the Legislature as the process has gone along. Just as his budget initiatives last year to deal with the crisis that we faced at that time was also improved as it went through the Appropriations process and the proposals for reorganization and other things were also improved going through the legislative process.

And I think that -- that I think is one of the things that we need to acknowledge about this bill. It is comprehensive. It is one that deals with the thorny issues that have been raised in this process from the beginning. One of the things that I think is -- is important is to look at the way in which the equity concerns and due process of teachers are treated in this bill, Madam President. And in many ways, the whole system of a teach evaluation process hinges upon the belief and acceptance of the teachers that the evaluation process is, in fact, fair and equitable. And this provides for a process of training of evaluators, of the administrators, who will be doing those crucial evaluations. This is something in many ways based on the successful model implemented in New Haven by an agreement between the teachers union and the board of education where a plan was negotiated in a contract at the end of 2009, implemented for the 2010/2011 school year. That identified about 75 teachers in need of improvement and that program did, as this one provides, in effect a mentoring mechanism for those teachers who are -- there is an effort to try to rehabilitate their performance so that it not an -- in effect a gotcha approach, but an effort but an effort to improve and restore teachers to professionalism and achievement in the classroom.

And this can be done. As we saw, the New Haven resulted in a process in which a number of teachers were separated from the system without any grievances being filed. This only happens if there is a process that everyone trusts and that's what we're hoping to build in this bill as well on the statewide model.

Again, I wanted to thank the Governor, as we said at the beginning, for his leadership, and our chair, Senator Stillman, who has absolutely extraordinarily resourceful and vital in this entire process, shepherding it along in all of the difficult times and under all of the adversarial conditions sometimes pertaining. Our President Pro Tem, Senator Williams, as we know, dug into the issues here with a complexity and understanding which was remarkable in terms of looking at comparative models from all over the country in ways of helping improve and shape this bill. Senator Harp, and what she brought to it in terms of the overall reflection of how this fits in with urban needs and also with budget needs was an absolutely essential part of this process.

So I believe that what comes to us tonight, although it came at a difficult hour, as someone asked is this the last bill of the night, and I said, perhaps, or the first bill in the morning, but in either way, it is a major achievement. Although we're all exhausted as we debated, I think it is in so many ways worth celebrating, Madam President. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Senator McKinney.

SENATOR McKINNEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

I think one of the reasons why we all want to talk for a little bit on this bill is because we've all been in school or we have kids in school or we have family members who have been teachers. I've seen my three kids go through the public school system and my oldest is now at a private Catholic school. They've all done fabulously well. But while we talk about what's happening in those schools, we tend to forget the fact that one of the reasons why my kids have done so well is because all of the things that they've had when they were at home not in the school and that's not really in the bill that we're dealing with here.

The fact of the matter is that education equals freedom. It is a civil right for all of our children. It is in many ways the key to fulfilling the American dream and we are failing too many of our students and our children. We're falling behind the rest of the world and Connecticut is falling behind the rest of the country and it's simply unacceptable. I'm glad Governor Malloy wanted to focus on education reform. I think we need to be a little bit fair to past governors. He's not the first to talk about education reform. Many in this circle and in the House have worked on education reform prior to his election. That doesn't mean shouldn't be applauded for focusing on something very important, but he's also focused on things that he's called "bold," yet things that 30, 35 other states around the country have done. It's sad when we say things are "bold" for Connecticut when we lag behind so many other states.

And as much as I will praise for focusing education, I think it's also fair to be critical for the fact that much of the consternation that occurred during this last three months was because of some very poorly misplaced words in his speech about our teachers and what many teachers thought was an attack on them. Teachers aren't the problem in our school system. The bill the Governor put before us had a lot of controversial pieces with respect to tenure and evaluation. This bill does not link teacher's certification to their evaluation as the Governor proposed. This bill does not require the renewal of tenure as the Governor proposed. Tenure was never awarded simply for showing up and it's still not in this bill.

With respect to the Commissioner's network, the Governor limited a dismissal hearing to the question of whether the process was followed. The bill allows for me, and quite frankly, that's just fair. The Governor's bill gave broad authority to the Commissioner to operate the Commissioner's network and supercede existing state laws and this bill does not. The Governor's bill forced regionalization among small school districts like the one I represent. This bill does not. The Governor's bill wanted flexibility for higher performing schools. That's not in this bill. So there are a lot of differences.

What's good about this bill? And I have to admit, I haven't read every single word of almost 200 pages, although I've tried to. The early literacy programs, to me, are probably the single greatest achievement of this bill, also in the Governor's bill, but thanks to the hard work and dedication and commitment of members of this Legislature, in particular the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus. Study after study after study shows that if a child leaves third grade not knowing how to read, their educational success is so predictable and sadly so limited. Focusing on that issue is critically overdue for the state of Connecticut. The School Readiness Preschool slots, very important in this bill and I join in -- with the Governor in wanting one day a state where all kids are in a preschool. Funding for charter schools, an important improvement, and voag funding, are important to our state.

Minor changes like changes to the MBR are important to many of the towns that I represent because they're actually trying to find savings in the budget because of the MPR -- MBR are punished for doing so. Lastly, a process for trying to find the lowest performing schools in our state and turning them around. I guess that's where I wanted to end. I think I've told members of this circle before that my older brother has been a schoolteacher for over 25 years, 22, I believe, in the great city of Bridgeport, Longfellow School, and now, Roosevelt School. My guess is that Roosevelt is going to be in that Commissioner's network. I don't know that for a fact, but it might be. There will certainly be a couple of schools in the city of Bridgeport.

It pains me that we blame people like my brother for the failure of our kids to get a good education because I can't think of a better public servant I know. He's a fair better public servant than I am. Every single day he goes to work he has the ability to change a child's life. He has the ability to excite them about learning, to excite them about their future and to help them focus on what they want to be and what they want to do with their lives. There are a lot of problems that we need to fix in solving our achievement gap foremost about them. But we need to

work with our teachers not criticize them to get the job done.

Madam President, obviously, a lot of us on our side of the aisle have talked about the process. I take Senator Cassano's words to heart. It's the way building works. It doesn't mean it's right. And I think we'll just agree to disagree. I'm oftentimes ashamed of how things work in this building and dropping a 200-page education bill on one of the most important issues we're ever going to debate at the desks of Senators at midnight when no one has had a chance to read all 200 pages is not a process I'm proud of.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Senator Williams.

SENATOR WILLIAMS:

Thank you, Madam President. Good morning.

THE CHAIR:

Good morning.

SENATOR WILLIAMS:

I rise to support the education reform bill before us and I want to thank Governor Malloy for beginning this discussion, this important challenge to improve the quality of all of our schools in Connecticut. I want to thank Senator Stillman and her colleagues on the Education Committee, Majority Leader Marty Looney, and Speaker of the House Chris Donovan, and his colleagues in the House for their important work. I want to thank my Republican colleagues on the other side of the aisle, because, in fact, we have been involved in a lengthy dialogue that goes back to the beginning of this session when Governor Malloy made his initial proposal, our review together, as Democrats and Republicans, of his bill, the very thoughtful response to that bill that was voted out of the Education Committee with actually strong, but not unanimous,

Republican support for that bill, and the continuing dialogue about this issue and the specific legislation that has been ongoing for weeks and weeks. So I want to thank you Democrats and Republicans for your input.

You know, the great tradition of public schools in the United States goes back to the founding fathers and John Adams, in 1785, said the whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expenses of it. John Adams didn't say a handful of people. He didn't say the rich people or the privileged people. He said the whole people must take it upon themselves to education the whole people of the United States. In Connecticut, that means not only our best public schools. It means all of our public schools including the public schools in the greatest need in this state.

This legislation moves us forward in that direction more than we have seen in previous years. This meets the needs of students, not only their academic needs, which are vital to our future, but all of their needs, as has been pointed out with the extra high quality pre-K slots for children and opportunities for them with the family resource centers that provide the before- and after-school programs, the school-based health clinics to make sure that our children's health needs are met. You know, a lot of children come to school each day just hoping to have a place that is safe, that is secure, where they could be well-fed. And getting a good education on top of that, that's just an added benefit.

We must move forward in these schools that have the greatest need. It's no accident that almost of all lowest performing schools are in those parts of our state that have the greatest challenges in terms of low-income. They're the poorest neighborhoods. They have high unemployment rates. Folks need jobs. This bill does not turn our back on those schools and on those children and it addresses their needs not just from the point of the view of students as test takers. That's the wrong approach. Students are more than test takers. It must address their needs as individuals, individual children each with tremendous potential, not for us to put in some box and hand a number 2 pencil and say take the test and take it

again, but as children whose imaginations and creativity and potential must be realized.

The hour is late, Madam President, and others have gone into all the different aspects of this bill, this good bill before us. I just want to leave us on the note of a recent study that came out of the Center on Education Policy discussing the missions of public schools. So I would like to conclude my remarks by reciting six of these missions: To provide universal access to free education; to guarantee equal opportunities for all children, to unify a diverse population; to prepare people for citizenship in a democratic society; to prepare our young people to become economically self-sufficient; and to improve social conditions. Those have been the goals of our public schools. Our public schools have been successful in the past and with our work here today they can be successful in the future. And in that regard, I believe we must be humble. Humble because many of us have been down this road before and have failed and we must be persistent because we cannot fair. And if and when we do, we must try again and we must get it right.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark? Will you remark?

If not, Mr. Clerk, will you please call for a roll call vote. That machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Senators please return to the chamber. Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

If all members have voted -- if all members have voted, the machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill 458.

Total Number voting	35
Necessary for adoption	18
Those voting Yea	28
Those voting Nay	7
Those absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

The bill passes.

Can I ask for a point of personal privilege?

Today, one of our own in our circle is -- and it is today -- celebrating his birthday and it's Bob Duff. Senator Duff, Happy Birthday.

Are there any other points of personal privilege?

Announcements?

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Madam President.

Although Senator Duff is one of the younger members of our circle, I'm sure that he feels, as the rest of do, that we've aged a year since yesterday.

THE CHAIR:

Yes.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Madam President, I would move that Emergency Certified Senate Bill 458 be immediately transmitted to the House of Representatives.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.