

Education Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6922

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

Title: PROJECTS STATUTES.

Vote Date: 3/12/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/19/2025

File No.: 311

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill aims at streamlining and modernizing Connecticut's school construction laws by implementing recommendations from the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). The bill repeals the existing HVAC grant program and incorporates it into the broader school construction law, allowing DAS to approve HVAC grants more quickly without going through the annual priority list, while still requiring compliance with inspection standards. It also removes outdated requirements, such as the need for superintendents to confirm they considered wireless technology and school safety infrastructure when applying for construction grants. Additionally, it eliminates a provision that allowed districts to request forgiveness on state grant repayments if a school building was repurposed for non-educational public use before the 20-year amortization period. The bill simplifies the grant process further by removing the need for prior DAS approval on consultant contracts and removes specific references to funding for Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) projects. Overall, this bill is important because it improves the efficiency and flexibility of the school construction process, helps districts access HVAC funding more quickly, ensures responsible use of state funds, and brings outdated statutes in line with current needs.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Michelle Gilman, Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services](#): The Connecticut Department of Administrative Services (DAS) testified in support of HB 6922, emphasizing

that the bill makes necessary technical and substantive updates to the school building project grant program to improve its efficiency and accessibility. Key provisions include incorporating the HVAC grant program into the existing monthly reimbursement process, eliminating the burdensome competitive application and allowing for rolling submissions. The bill would also streamline construction processes for the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) by removing the requirement that it apply through the school building grant program, instead treating it like other state agency construction projects. DAS also supports removing outdated and redundant provisions, such as the requirement for districts to request forgiveness for building conversions now exempt from repayment requirements, and duplicative application requirements already addressed through existing plan processes. Overall, DAS believes HB 6922 will help school districts navigate and benefit from the grant program more effectively.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Alice Pritchard, Interim Executive Director, Connecticut Technical Education and Career System](#): submitted testimony in support of HB 6922, which proposes streamlining school building project approvals. She emphasized that CTECS currently faces a “duplicative process” by having to apply through both the state’s construction process and the DAS school building grant program, which is primarily designed for municipal reimbursements. This, she explained, leads to “confusion and delay in project delivery.” Dr. Pritchard urged lawmakers to pass the bill to allow CTECS projects to proceed solely through the state construction process, stating that “this legislation would eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and improve efficiency in delivering critical school facility improvements.”

[Louis Rosado Burch, Legislative Coordinator, Connecticut Education Association](#): voiced strong support for HB 6922, particularly its provisions that incorporate HVAC improvements into the state’s ongoing school construction program. He emphasized that “as many as one-third of Connecticut public schools are served by HVAC systems in need of repair or replacement,” and that the bill would provide a more accessible, rolling application process to address this need. Rosado Burch praised previous investments in HVAC upgrades but warned that the current grant process left behind many under-resourced districts: “Several well-funded districts were given access to the grant program while a number of distressed municipalities did not ‘make the cut.’” He called for equity-focused reforms to the program, including leveraging the \$138.5 million in unallocated air quality improvement funds, revisiting denied applications, allowing funding for maintenance in high-need districts, and investing in training to ensure compliance with inspection requirements. He concluded by urging swift passage of the bill to confirm “the state’s commitment to addressing school IAQ as a long-term funding priority.”

[Lon Seidman, Board of Government Relations, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education](#): offered testimony supporting multiple education-related bills, while also offering some concerns and recommendations. On SB 1244, he supported the move toward setting tuition rates for special education outplacements to enhance budget transparency but cautioned that “setting a tuition rate could cause private providers to cease offering certain programs if the rate is too low.” He urged the legislature to await the State Department of Education’s study before proceeding. CABA also endorsed HB 6922, particularly the

integration of HVAC grants into the existing DAS school construction grant cycle for faster disbursement, noting it would “make it a quicker turnaround for disbursement to districts.”

[Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Public School](#)

[Superintendents](#): Testified in support of HB 6922, emphasizing the need to fully fund Connecticut’s student-centered education model. She praised the legislature’s past investment of \$150 million in public education but stressed that more work remains to ensure equity across all districts. “We must fund all of our students based on their learning needs,” she stated, urging lawmakers to stay the course toward full implementation. She also noted that “the current system does not provide equitable opportunities for all children,” and called for a funding formula that truly reflects student needs, regardless of district.

[Thomas Baird, Superintendent of Schools, Hebron Public Schools](#): submitted testimony in support of HB 6922, specifically advocating for the inclusion of indoor air quality improvements in the state school building grant program. He noted that Hebron has two school projects nearly ready for submission, aimed at addressing long-standing heating, cooling, and ventilation issues. Without state funding, these projects would likely be delayed. Baird referenced past incidents of school closures due to lack of heat, early dismissals from excessive heat, and health concerns among students. He emphasized that poor conditions hinder both learning and teaching, concluding, “Our students and staff deserve better learning and working environments.”

[Bill Beckert, Chair of the Board of Education, Farmington](#): submitted testimony in support of HB 6922, which would allow municipal HVAC projects to qualify for state reimbursement under the School Building Project program. He highlighted that Farmington’s four elementary schools lack central air, causing frequent disruptions to learn from May through October due to extreme heat. Without state support, the town has been unable to proceed because of the high costs. Beckert described the negative educational and health impacts on students and staff, including early dismissals and rising absences. He urged the state to use its budget surplus to fund essential HVAC upgrades, particularly for communities with limited financial resources.

[Matthew Conway Jr., Superintendent of Schools, Derby Public Schools](#): submitted testimony in support of H.B. 6922, particularly lines 191–193, which would make HVAC system upgrades and indoor air quality improvements eligible under school construction statutes. He stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the critical role of ventilation in supporting health and learning. Many Connecticut schools, especially older ones, lack modern HVAC systems. Conway argued that H.B. 6922 would enable districts to upgrade these systems, enhancing both student health and academic performance. He urged the committee to support this vital provision.

[Riju Das](#): submitted testimony in support of HB 6922, which would enable municipal school HVAC projects to qualify for partial state reimbursement through the School Building Project. He highlighted how financial constraints have delayed crucial upgrades, such as central air installation in Farmington’s four elementary schools. Das emphasized the severe learning disruptions caused by extreme heat and poor indoor air quality, particularly for vulnerable students and staff. He urged the legislature to intervene amid federal uncertainty, investing in safer, healthier school environments to combat learning loss and support student well-being.

[Joshua Davidson](#): submitted testimony in support of HB 6922, stressing the need for state reimbursement for municipal school HVAC and renovation projects. He noted that Farmington's four elementary schools lack central air, causing disruptive heat during warmer months. Davidson highlighted the negative health and educational impacts of poor indoor conditions, particularly for immunocompromised students and staff. He argued that the current system favors new construction over renovations and that HB 6922 would allow towns to address these urgent needs more effectively.

[Kimberly Glassman, Director, Foundation for Fair Contracting of Connecticut](#): submitted testimony in support of HB 6922, specifically sections 2 and 5, which focus on indoor air quality improvements in schools. The nonprofit, which monitors compliance with prevailing wage laws on public projects, endorsed adding HVAC upgrades to the list of projects eligible for monthly administrative approval—streamlining the process and ensuring a stable funding source. Glassman highlighted the importance of simplifying applications and deferred to SMACNA and member Matt Cole for technical input, urging the committee to consider their recommendations and amend the bill accordingly. FFC encouraged the bill's favorable passage.

[Emily Kaliney](#): testified in strong support of HB 6922, emphasizing the urgent need for state support in funding HVAC upgrades in public schools. She highlighted that Farmington's four elementary schools lack central air conditioning and that excessive heat has become a recurring issue, disrupting learning, and affecting both students and staff. "Because of the trapped heat and humidity, students have difficulty concentrating, participating, and learning," she wrote, also noting the health risks for immunocompromised individuals. Kaliney argued that without state reimbursement, Farmington and other municipalities with limited financial resources are unable to move forward with essential infrastructure projects. She urged the legislature to act, especially given the state's current budget surplus, stating: "We're counting on the State to run interference on the chaos and safeguard our students and young people — who have been through quite a bit in recent years." She concluded by affirming that passing HB 6922 would help ensure safer and healthier learning environments for Connecticut's youngest residents.

[Mariah Reisner](#): testified in support of HB 6922, urging state assistance for critical school infrastructure upgrades, especially HVAC and ventilation. She noted that Farmington's elementary schools lack central air, causing heat-related learning disruptions, illness, and absenteeism—issues worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. With limited local funding options, she stressed the need for state aid and pointed to recent heat-related school closures as a burden on both students and working families. She urged lawmakers to support the bill to ensure safe, healthy learning environments across Connecticut.

[Taneta McCaw](#): testified in strong support of increased funding for CREC magnet schools and called on the Education Committee to develop a long-term, student-centered funding plan. Her son, now attending the Academy of Science and Innovation in New Britain, has thrived in a diverse, inclusive environment since his early years at Discovery Academy. She praised the school culture, where he "is more than a number" and feels confident speaking up, adding, "The color of his skin is celebrated along with everyone's." McCaw contrasted this with traditional district schools, where some students "get lost in the shuffle." She cautioned

that without additional funding, CREC may be forced to cut programs or raise tuition for local districts, and urged lawmakers to fulfill their commitment to all students' futures.

[Sam Reisner](#): urged support for HB 6922, stressing the urgent need to retrofit aging school buildings with modern HVAC systems to ensure safe, healthy, and effective learning environments. He underscored how poor ventilation and lack of air conditioning contribute to illness, absenteeism, and learning disruptions—especially during the warmer months. “During these hotter periods, learning is disrupted as students are cycled through the limited air-conditioned common spaces to provide some level of relief,” he wrote. Reisner also emphasized that many municipalities, including Farmington, cannot afford these upgrades without state support: “Projects such as roof repairs have simply been more critical... But together, I believe we can have the resources to meet ventilation needs in addition to other priorities.”

[Matthew Cole, Connecticut Chapter of The Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association](#): offered conditional support for HB 6922, praising its creation of a long-term funding stream for HVAC and indoor air quality (IAQ) improvements. “School children and educators deserve clean, healthy air, regardless of which district they attend or teach in,” he said. However, he urged the committee to preserve the current IAQ grant program through FY 2026, allowing DAS time to revisit denied applications. With \$138.5 million in uncommitted IAQ funds remaining, Cole stressed the need to direct those dollars to the districts most in need. He also called for equitable funding access, including support for underfunded and Alliance Districts, Tools for Schools training, and environmental testing in Environmental Justice communities.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Jim Welch](#): opposed HB 6922, raising concerns about the bill's exclusion of key stakeholders in special education. Drawing from personal experience, he described how attending BBA helped him thrive academically—an experience that starkly contrasts with his son's struggles in a traditional school setting. “He hates school, and his poor academic performance... negatively affects his mental health,” Welch shared. He criticized the bill for omitting Approved Private Special Education Schools from grant opportunities and questioned the practicality of requiring tuition rates to be set by December 31 of the preceding year. Additionally, he pointed out that Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), which offer comparable services, are “not included in much of the language.”

Reported by: Chris Peritore

Date: 4/7/2025