

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1393

AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION OF STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS
FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS AND REVISIONS TO THE SCHOOL

Title: BUILDING PROJECTS STATUTES.

Vote Date: 3/12/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/3/2025

File No.: 338

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill aims to streamline and improve the process for securing grants for HVAC systems in schools by repealing the existing HVAC grant program and incorporating the approval process into the school construction law. This change eliminates the need for annual priority list reviews, effectively allowing the same HVAC grants to be issued more efficiently, while still requiring compliance with existing HVAC inspection and evaluation standards. Additionally, the bill repeals certain requirements related to the consideration of wireless connectivity and school safety infrastructure, as well as the provision that allowed districts to seek forgiveness for bond repayments if a school building ceased to be used for educational purposes. It also removes the requirement for prior approval of consultant services contracts for state grant eligibility and eliminates references to CTECS projects in the school construction funding process. These changes are important as they simplify administrative processes, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and allow for more timely and effective funding, particularly in addressing critical infrastructure needs like HVAC systems in schools.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Michelle Gilman, Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services:](#) offered concerns about the bill. She has no concerns on Section 1 on the bill but opposes Sections 2 and 3 of this bill. She urges the committee to consider alternative approaches to supporting early childhood and special education programs that do not overburden the current school building project grant program financially and administratively.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Kristen Abrahamson, Executive Vice President, Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut, Inc:](#) offered testimony in support of the bill, stating the bill includes eight new projects totaling about \$262.7 million in costs and a state grant commitment of approximately \$152.4 million, along with one project reauthorization requesting an additional \$50.7 million. States a concern about the decreasing trend in school construction funding, as previous years saw larger commitments. She argues that funding these projects is crucial for local communities and the state's economy, creating jobs and economic activity.

[Thomas Danehy, Executive Director, ACES:](#) offered testimony in support of the bill. He requests additional funding for the ACES at Chase 6-12 renovation project. He emphasizes the importance of creating safe, code-compliant learning environments with healthy air quality and appropriate spaces for students, teachers, and communities. He explains that delays in the project occurred when the original contractor, Skanska, closed its Connecticut operations, leading to inflation-related cost increases. He urges a request of \$14,811,185 in additional funding to cover the costs and ensure the project meets educational needs for the Waterbury region's students.

[Alice Pritchard, Interim Executive Director, Connecticut Technical Education and Career System:](#) offered testimony in support of the bill, stating that Section 1 of the bill would allow previously authorized funds be reauthorized to allow the agency to complete the construction of Platt Technical High School in Milford, Connecticut, which consists of new athletic fields, bus garage, and building maintenance facility on remaining available real estate. She states that the completion of construction of Platt Tech will enhance the ability of CTECS to provide top notch educational and trade opportunities to the student body.

[William Rice, Assistant Executive Director, Area Cooperative Educational Services:](#) offered testimony in support of the bill, stating that this bill will have a positive impact on the financial viability of projects. He urges the committee to consider equitable and sustainable funding to support a "school within a school" model, which helps districts address space shortages and reduces costs while keeping students within their home districts.

[Lon Seidman, Chairman, Essex Board of Education:](#) offered testimony in support of the bill, stating that many school districts with existing buildings in need of renovation are ineligible for these bonuses due to current space standards set by the Department of Administrative Services. He states the effectiveness of interdistrict special education programs and suggests that a waiver for space standards in renovation projects would support regional collaboration. He also states that requiring referendum approval for construction projects before the state commits funding adds uncertainty, which could be reduced to encourage more partnerships.

[Michael Thompson, Executive Director, SMACNA Connecticut:](#) offered testimony in support of the bill, stating the bill includes eight new projects totaling approximately \$262.7 million, with an estimated state grant obligation of \$152.4 million, as well as a reauthorization request for an additional \$50.7 million. He states concern on the downward trend in school construction funding, highlighting that funding for new projects has decreased in recent years. He also states that that state funding for school construction is vital for municipalities and

local school districts and generates significant economic benefits, including the creation of construction jobs and economic activity.

[Gerald Marotti, President, International Union of Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers Local 1 Connecticut](#): offered testimony in support of the bill, stating the bill adopts the 2025 School Building Project Priority List and authorizes state grant commitments for the projects. He states concern on a downward trend in school construction funding and hopes the policy makers can take steps to address it. He also states that state funding for school construction projects provides much needed assistance to municipalities and local school districts, as well as create thousands of new construction jobs and boost economic growth.

[Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents](#): offered testimony in support of the bill with general comments, stating the inclusion of new language that appears to increase bonding for special education buildings. She states that CAPSS is always in favor of increased funding for school infrastructure, but also includes that it is important that the money remain flexible and not solely directed to specific locations or projects at the expense of critical facility needs.

[Meg Scata, Board Member, Portland Board of Education](#): offered testimony in support of the bill, stating the increased fifteen percent for school construction grants to facilitate educating more special education students in their home districts will be a positive factor in consideration of services and staffing that go into providing programming for specific special education needs.

[Jennifer Jacobsen](#): offered testimony in support of the bill, stating the importance of investing in facilities to support in-district programs that cater to students with complex learning needs, early literacy, alternative high school, preschool, and social-emotional and behavioral supports. She states that districts need appropriate facilities, including specialized spaces for support services like speech therapy, OT, PT, psychologists, and social workers, to effectively serve these students. She urges legislation to support the bill as it will help districts avoid high costs and ensure access to critical programming.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Matthew Domejczyk, Assistant Clerk Date: 4/3/25