



# THE BOARD REPORT



2002-2003: Issue 5

February-March 2003

The following is a summary of the February 5 and March 5, 2003, meetings of the State Board of Education.

The principals of Molloy School in West Haven and Toquam Magnet School in Stamford were invited to address the Board on practices they credit for their schools' successes and their recognition by The Education Trust as high-performing schools. In its *Dispelling the Myth Report*, the Education Trust identifies schools with high-minority and/or high-poverty enrollments that perform in the top third of all schools in their state in state assessments.

## **Toquam Magnet School, Stamford**

**Eileen Swerdlick, Principal of Toquam Magnet School**, described the racial and socioeconomic diversity of Toquam's 462 students and the role of the public education system in meeting varied needs. She characterized Toquam's progress as "humble," recognizing growth in achievement, yet room for improvement. Student success, Ms. Swerdlick continued, is attributable to several key initiatives. For example, careful scheduling and reducing the need for hallway "passing time" equates to more instructional time for students. Good communication with staff members and with parents, too, promotes efficiency, clear expectations and accountability. Ms. Swerdlick explained that teachers are required to produce and distribute a monthly newsletter which serves several purposes. Parents and students are kept informed of what will be taught in the coming months in each subject area. Preparation of the newsletter is a good exercise to keep teachers focused on a continuum in instruction and skill-building. The newsletter also serves as an important communication tool for parents. Student assessment data are carefully and regularly analyzed, and drive the decision-making process, Ms. Swerdlick continued. Ms. Swerdlick allows teachers additional time to focus on teaching and learning by assuming responsibility for parent outreach, often in the community – at church, the laundromat or the grocery store.

## **Anna Molloy School, West Haven**

**Superintendent of West Haven Public Schools Paul Tortora** and **Ellen Fenti-Morrison, Principal of Molloy School**, stated that goals for students are established in the belief that all children can and will succeed. The school environment, Ms. Fenti-Morrison explained, supports student achievement in a caring and challenging setting. The school places a strong emphasis on character education. She attributed student achievement, in large part, to the infusion of character education into their daily routine. The school environment must be welcoming in order for students to thrive. Toward this end, teachers are expected to greet *all* Molloy students at the front door as they enter the school building, and to assume responsibility for the total Molloy community, not just their students. School starts each day with a 15-minute "morning meeting" where children have the opportunity to interact with each other.

Another focal point of Molloy School is writing skills. Students spend a portion of each school day writing, and their work is celebrated at an end-of-year "Authors' Presentation." Staff development is provided in the area of early intervention and how to address special educational needs in the school setting. One area the school would like to improve in is parental involvement. Ms. Fenti-Morrison said that several initiatives, including "Family Activity Nights," are designed to bring parents and families into the school. This is an area that she will continue to focus on.

**SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL PRACTICES IN NEW HAVEN:  
Woodward School, Edgewood School and East Rock Community School**

New Haven schools showed increases in the percentage of students within the goal range in all areas of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) from 2000 through 2002. At three New Haven schools, already-high participation rates increased slightly or remained constant, and scores on the CMT increased dramatically. The principals of Woodward Avenue School, Edgewood Magnet School and East Rock Community School were invited to share practices in their respective schools that they credit for success on the CMT. These schools showed increases in the percentage of students reaching or exceeding the statewide goal between 7 and 33 percentage points from 2000 to 2002, while testing the same number or more students.

**Bonnie Pachesa, Principal of Edgewood Magnet School,** commended the organizational efforts made by the central office staff to provide staff development for all teachers. Edgewood, designated a "HOT School," places a strong emphasis and spends a great deal of time on students' writing. It also promotes the arts as a way to enhance self-esteem and motivation, providing many opportunities for students to celebrate their successes. Other practices that Ms. Pachesa believes contribute to improved academic success include an extended-day program, looping from Grade 5 to Grade 6, and consistent high expectations of students and staff members. In addition, the inclusion model ensures that all children meet high standards by receiving district curriculum with appropriate modifications.

**William Drago, Principal of Woodward School,** stated that Woodward's 2002 CMT scores improved dramatically when compared with the prior two years. He credited this success to a comprehensive school plan, incorporating state and district standards, as well as careful analyses of data from state and local assessments. Student groupings are redesigned based on the results of such analyses, he noted. The districtwide initiatives, particularly the reading program and Saxon math program, have been effective in improving student achievement. Professional development is aligned to district initiatives, and staff members are highly motivated. Instructional staff stability, small school size and a lower Grade 3 class size, too, are important factors in improving achievement. Regrettably, Mr. Drago added, Woodward is scheduled to close due to construction on Interstate 95.

**Salvatore Punzo, Principal of East Rock Community School,** described East Rock as a kindergarten through Grade 8 school, with 802 students. His school has incorporated Collaborative Planning Time, scheduled around clear routines and requirements. Time is used primarily for analyzing data and aligning the curriculum to the district's content standards, as well as identifying individual students' needs based on CMT results, end-of-year assessments, test scores and performance-based assessments. Mr. Punzo told the Board that he reviews staff performance and adjusts teaching assignments as appropriate. The Extended Day Academy and summer school program, coupled with a stable staff, also support student achievement. Mr. Punzo concluded his remarks, "The person in front of the classroom is the one who makes the difference."

The Board received the report "Interdistrict Magnet Schools and Magnet Programs in Connecticut: An Evaluation Report." The first Connecticut interdistrict magnet school opened in 1989. The mission of magnet schools is twofold: (1) to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation of students and professional staff; and (2) to offer high-quality and special programs that improve student achievement and provide unique curriculum and instruction. Some of the key findings of the report follow.

## MAGNET SCHOOLS (continued)

- ✍ Approximately 10,700 students from nearly 100 school districts participate in 31 interdistrict magnet schools and programs.
- ✍ Interdistrict magnet schools and programs have more economically diverse student populations than most other schools in the state.
- ✍ Twenty-one percent of the magnet school professional staff is minority, compared with seven percent statewide.
- ✍ Trends in student performance on the Connecticut Mastery Test in mathematics, reading and writing are positive, and suggest that the difference between the percentage of interdistrict magnet school students scoring at or above the state goal and the state average decreases as students complete a greater number of years in the schools.
- ✍ Large proportions of parents and teachers share a common perception that interdistrict magnet schools offer high-quality academic programs and have high expectations for student achievement.
- ✍ Parents select magnet schools for their children because of the challenging academic programs offered and the high-quality professional staff employed by the magnet schools.
- ✍ The high school dropout rate for interdistrict magnet schools was 6 percent in 2001, compared with a statewide rate of 11 percent and an Education Reference Group I rate of 23 percent.
- ✍ The percentage of magnet school graduates taking the SAT annually has been well above the statewide average, while total SAT performance has been at or above the local and ERG I levels.
- ✍ Teachers describe their magnet school principals as effective instructional leaders who encourage their participation in decision making.

Timothy Nee, Principal of the Montessori Magnet School in Hartford, stated that it is important to observe a magnet school in operation when assessing its effectiveness. The school climate, he noted, cannot always be quantified, but is an important indicator of a school's success. Mr. Nee stated that detailed data available about student achievement is extremely helpful in strategic planning and particularly useful in determining how best to address areas in need of improvement. He described the lengthy waiting list for entry into the Montessori Magnet School: 315 applications were received for 40 available seats. The student population is approximately 22 percent white, 34 percent Latino, 38 percent black and 6 percent Asian and Native American. When asked where the Montessori students go upon completing 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Mr. Nee replied that many pursue other magnet school options, some enroll in private schools and some return to their neighborhood public school.

## CONNECTICUT'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Board adopted the *Report on the Operation of the Charter Schools in Connecticut*, as required by statute for transmission to the General Assembly. The report addresses four areas: (1) adequacy of funding; (2) adequacy and availability of suitable facilities; (3) statutory changes; and (4) strategic school profiles. The following recommendations were set forth in the Department's report:

### Funding

- ✍ Increase the annual per pupil state grant for charter schools to more adequately cover the operation and facility needs of the schools.
- ✍ Provide access to and funding for interdistrict transportation to charter schools to help reduce of racial, ethnic and economic isolation.
- ✍ Provide funding on a biennial basis to support two to three additional charter schools.

### Statutory Changes

- ✍ Due to fiscal constraints, a recommendation was not made to expand the number of charter schools.

### Adequacy and Availability of Facilities

- ✍ Expand the provision for school construction grants to include three state charter schools that are being considered for renewal by the State Board of Education in May 2003.

### Strategic School Profiles (SSP)

- ✍ The Board received the SSP for each of Connecticut's charter schools. It also reviewed the Evaluation Report on Connecticut's Charter Schools, presented by Dr. Jerry Horn and Dr. Gary Miron of Western Michigan University (WMU). A summary of that presentation follows.

## **EVALUATION REPORT BY WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Jerry Horn and Dr. Gary Miron summarized their findings of their five-year study of Connecticut's charter schools under four categories: (1) Accountability; (2) Student Achievement; (3) Organization and Governance; and (4) School Satisfaction.

### **Accountability**

In comparison to other states that WMU has studied, Connecticut's accountability for charter schools is more rigorous, our charter schools receive more technical assistance from state agencies and external sources and have received relatively better funding.

### **Student Achievement**

Initially, charter school students were performing lower than the state average and their host districts. After four or five years in operation, however, charter schools are performing at levels similar to their host districts and slightly lower than the state average. Charter schools outperform their host districts in terms of gain scores (change in student performance over time). Charter schools show more positive gains on the Connecticut Mastery Test than on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test. WMU attributes this, in part, to the large proportion of schools catering to students at risk, as well as the finite set of charter high schools. In addition, the number of test takers varies extensively among the charter high schools and the district high schools.

The results of WMU's trend analysis and cohort analysis indicated that charter schools were making larger gains than their host districts. The longer a charter school has been in operation, the larger the gain on both trend and cohort analyses.

### **Organization and Governance**

There is a high level of teacher involvement in decision making about the operation of the school. Teachers' schedules support more interaction and dialogue between and among teachers and administrators. Instruction is scheduled to accommodate student learning. Governing boards include a teacher representative and most boards include an excellent cross section of parents and community members with diverse skills.

### **School Satisfaction**

WMU survey results indicate that a majority of teachers believed that student achievement was improving and that their school was a safe place; parents believed that the quality of instruction at their school was high and that their child was receiving sufficient attention and their achievement level had improved; overwhelmingly, parents felt that their children felt safe at school; students were satisfied with the close relationship between student and teacher, the amount of academic support they received and the school discipline.

Dr. Horn and Dr. Miron attributed the success of charter schools to greater accountability – from the application through the operation phases, small schools and class size, and parental support.

**Tania Kelley, Director of New Beginnings Charter School in Bridgeport**, described the unique environment her school provides students and expressed her hope that New Beginnings would not be the last charter school to open in Connecticut. When asked to describe the relationship between her school and the local district, Ms. Kelley stated that their interaction was primarily in the areas of student transportation, special education and professional development. The charter school has been trying to coordinate professional development opportunities with the local school system, but is often restricted from doing so because of differing schedules.

**STATEWIDE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM  
REQUIRED UNDER THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) ACT**

The Board reviewed a draft K-12 statewide accountability system that responds to the requirements of the federal legislation. Connecticut has been converting its statewide statutory accountability system (1999-2002) to the NCLB (2002-2014) under Section 10-223e of the Connecticut General Statutes, adopted in August 2002. The single statewide accountability system will be applied to all public elementary, middle and high schools and districts. All public schools will be accountable for the performance of student subgroups – including major racial/ethnic subgroups, students with disabilities, limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, and economically disadvantaged students -- through a determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), provided that the school and subgroup meet a designated minimum size requirement.

As stated in the NCLB legislation, the starting point to determine AYP is “the percentage of students at the proficient level who are in the school at the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile in the state, based on enrollment, among all the schools ranked by the percentage of students at the proficient level for elementary and middle schools and for high schools.” The reading and mathematics test scores from the 2001-02 Connecticut Mastery Test and Connecticut Academic Performance Test were used to calculate the starting point for measuring whether AYP is made each subsequent year by all schools and all subgroups within the schools. In addition to meeting the percent proficient standard in reading and mathematics, a 95 percent participation rate across all the state tests (standard, out-of-level and the CMT/CAPT Checklist) is required for each school and subgroup.

A school will be identified as “in need of improvement” if it does not make AYP for two consecutive years. Consequences of being designated as “in need of improvement” will vary according to a school's Title I status. Schools receiving Title I funds are subject to the consequences prescribed in NCLB and are proposed to be eligible to receive additional federal funds. Identified non-Title I schools which do not receive additional funds will comply with the consequences identified in the State School Improvement Plans.

Each state is required to establish intermediate goals for determining AYP that increase in equal increments over the 12-year timeline to reach 100 percent proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014.

The draft proposal will be discussed with Connecticut educators and returned for Board adoption in May 2003.

**2002 STATEWIDE CONNECTICUT MASTERY TEST RESULTS**

The Board received a report on the 2002 statewide results of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). An average of 61 percent of students statewide achieved the state goal levels across the reading, writing and mathematics tests in Grades 4, 6 and 8 in September 2002. Performance has grown slowly over the last two years, and there has been an increased percentage of students taking the exams, including more limited-English-proficient students, special education students and students from our cities. Data reveal a small closing of the achievement gaps between poor and minority students and the state averages in student performance on the 2002 CMT. Not satisfied with these results, Commissioner Sergi stated, “We are going to have to step up our annual progress significantly in order to meet the new federal statutory expectations of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) in terms of the annual growth in achievement.” To incorporate the NCLB requirements into Connecticut's reporting system, five levels of performance are now reported: Advanced (Level 5, which is a subset of “goal”); Goal (Level 4); Proficient (Level 3); Basic (Level 2), and Below Basic (Level 1).

**CONNECTICUT ADMINISTRATOR TEST (CAT) RESULTS: 2001-02**

The Board reviewed the results of the first-year administration of the Connecticut Administrator Test (CAT). The test was approved in 2001 as a way of further enhancing the skills of educators seeking a recommendation for an endorsement in intermediate administration or supervision from their preparing institution, and as a measure of academic quality. The CAT fulfills the statutory mandate that applicants shall achieve a satisfactory evaluation on the appropriate State Board of Education-approved subject area assessment. The CAT consists of four modules: (a) an assessment of instructional and teacher support within (1) an elementary and (2) a secondary school context and (b) an assessment of school improvement within (1) an

## **CAT RESULTS (continued)**

elementary and (2) a secondary school context. Trained Connecticut administrators use the Connecticut School Leader Standards as a benchmark in their evaluation of prospective educational administrators. Key findings of the analysis include:

- ✍ In 2001-02, 301 candidates took one or more CAT modules. The cumulative pass rate was 72 percent.
- ✍ Candidates taking the CAT in separate administrations performed better than those candidates who took all four modules in a single administration.
- ✍ Pass rates varied from 54 percent to 85 percent across the six Connecticut educational leadership programs.

The Department will prepare annual CAT reports to assist educational leadership programs in reviewing and using results to study and, if appropriate, adapt their curriculum, and strengthen their focus on the Connecticut School Leader Standards. CAT candidates will continue to be advised to take the modules separately (e.g., two at one time). The Department will continue to monitor the pass rates and report back to the State Board next year.

## **CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION (CABE)**

The Board held its annual joint meeting with the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. This forum provides an opportunity for both boards to discuss areas of mutual concern and recent developments at the local and state levels. This year's session focused primarily on implementation of the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Robert Rader, Executive Director of CABE, introduced members of the CABE Board of Directors: Mary Broderick, President of CABE, East Lyme; Bobby Poole, Danbury; Allesandra Urist, Westport; Gary Brochu, Berlin; Sally Boske, Middletown; Frank Emanuele, Jr., Cromwell; Cal Heminway, Granby; Jean Lafave, Regional School District No. 7; Arleen Pedone, Bethel; and Jan Polito, Milford.

## **RECOGNITION OF TEACHERS WHO HAVE EARNED NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION**

The Board was pleased to honor the following teachers who completed the rigorous process to obtain certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards:

- ✍ Sharon A. Bly, a science teacher at Bethel High School;
- ✍ Michele R. Cassel, an art teacher at Harborside Middle School in Milford;
- ✍ Jennifer D. Cecarelli, an elementary school teacher at Wesley School in Middletown;
- ✍ Kathy F. Gage, an elementary school teacher at Simon Lake School in Milford;
- ✍ Carolanne E. Jones, an elementary school teacher at Simon Lake School in Milford;
- ✍ Camille A. Kochanowski, an elementary school teacher in language arts at Deep River Elementary School;
- ✍ Katherine M. LaRosa, an elementary school teacher at John F. Kennedy School in Windsor;
- ✍ Frances A. Lassow, an English/language arts teacher at East Windsor High School;
- ✍ Jeffrey S. Melendez, a middle school physical education teacher at East School in New Canaan;
- ✍ Steven Dellinger-Pate, a mathematics teacher at Fairfield High School; and
- ✍ Kristin A. Taylor, an English/language arts teacher at Waterford High School.

These 11 teachers join 55 fellow educators in Connecticut, and 23,937 teachers nationwide, who have become nationally certified since the inception of the program in 1995. Several initiatives and incentives have been implemented at both the state and district levels to encourage greater teacher participation in the National Board certification process. For further information about National Board Certification, please contact Associate Commissioner Betty J. Sternberg, 860.713.6700.

The Board approved the Plan of Representation submitted by the Reapportionment Committee of Regional School District No. 15, serving Middlebury and Southbury. The certification of the plan has been sent to the town clerk in each town and the Committee. The Committee is responsible for holding public meetings in each town to present the plan of representation to the public, and to set dates upon which referenda shall be held in each town. If the majority of votes in each town are affirmative, the plan of representation shall be established.

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR  
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

The Board received the 2002 Annual Report of the Connecticut Advisory Council for School Administrator Professional Standards. The Council focused most of its attention on school administrator shortages and strategies to maintain an adequate number of qualified school leaders. The Council will focus on policies and programs which impact administrator and teacher supply and demand; time, including strategies that enhance opportunities for professional teams to work together to address student learning issues; comprehensive approaches to recruiting teacher leaders to become school leaders; changing roles of educational leadership preparation programs; new administrator induction and support; the certification continuum for administrators; and compensation, including salary and retirement incentives.

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR  
TEACHER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

The Board received the 2002 Annual Report of the Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards. The Council focused most of its attention on ways to ensure an adequate supply of qualified teachers in Connecticut's classrooms. Next year the Council will continue to focus on areas of teacher support and retention as well as mandates, and will also consider teacher preparation, certification and professional service.

The Board approved the Advanced Alternative Preparation for School Library Media Specialist Certification Program through September 30, 2005. This program allows successful classroom teachers the opportunity, through a school year of preparation and an intensive summer program, to become certified as school library media specialists. This alternate route program was originally developed to respond to the ongoing shortage of certified library media specialists.

**CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL ACCREDITATION:  
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.  
Connecticut Association of Independent Schools**

The Board approved the Criteria and Procedures for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC) and the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), through March 4, 2013. This approval will allow these organizations to accredit schools under their jurisdiction and provide a process for recommendation to the Commissioner to grant, renew or revoke the approval of such schools. NEASC is authorized to accredit public elementary and secondary schools and private K-12 schools, while CAIS is authorized to accredit private elementary schools.

**APPROVAL OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM:  
UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD**

The Board granted provisional approval for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2006, to the undergraduate and graduate educator preparation programs at the University of Hartford. The Board required annual interim reports and a future site visit. The Commissioner's recommendation for provisional approval was based on the findings of a joint National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education-state visiting team and the Program Review Committee. Annual interim reports on steps taken to address areas designated as "in need of improvement" are required.

**APPROVAL OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM:  
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT**

The Board granted full program approval for the period October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2008, to the undergraduate and graduate educator preparation programs at the University of Connecticut. The Commissioner's recommendation for full program approval was based on the findings of a joint National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education-state visiting team and the Program Review Committee. Annual interim reports on steps taken to address areas designated as "in need of improvement" are required.

The Board accepted from Konica Corporation two color copiers, which will be used by the Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction.

The Board approved the Department's State Plan for Fiscal Year 2003-Summer Food Services Program for Children for submission to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This 100 percent federally funded program funds a nonprofit food service program for children during the summer months. It is estimated that the Connecticut summer program will cost \$1,255,396 and will provide a total of 595,000 meals during the summer of 2003.

**REVOCAION OF CERTIFICATE**

After due consideration of the evidence, briefs and arguments submitted in the Matter of Donna A. Simler, the Board adopted the Supplemental Finding of Facts and Recommended Decision prepared by hearing officer Donal Collimore, with the following amendment: The Board concludes that the Commissioner has met his burden of proof with regard to all counts of the Revised Amended Administrative Complaint, including the Eleventh Count, and revoked the teaching certificates of Donna A. Simler.

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**Regional Vocational-Technical School System (RVTSS) Matters**

**ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATIONS**

The Board approved the Regional Vocational-Technical School System's *Administration of Medications in Schools – Biennial Review*. Pursuant to current regulations concerning the administration of medications in schools, the policy and procedures were submitted to the Department of Health for review and approval.

# CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(effective July 1, 2002)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE</b></p> <p><b>Address:</b> 165 Capitol Ave. Room 301 Hartford, CT 06106</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> (860) 713-6510</p> <p><b>Facsimile:</b> (860) 713-7002</p> <p><b>E-Mail:</b> <a href="mailto:pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us">pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us</a></p> <p>To obtain a copy of a report considered by the Board, please contact the Office of Public Information, 860-713-6526.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Craig E. Toensing, Chairperson</i> <i>Janet M. Finneran, Vice Chairperson</i> <i>Amparo Adib-Samii</i> <i>Donald J. Coolican</i> <i>Natalie L. Ivanoff</i> <i>Patricia B. Luke</i> <i>Terri L. Masters</i> <i>Timothy J. McDonald</i> <i>Derek Smitt</i> <i>Allan B. Taylor</i> <i>Annika L. Warren</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Theodore S. Sergi, Secretary</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Valerie Lewis, ex officio</i></p>
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**NOTE:** The next meeting of the State Board of Education will be Wednesday, May 7, 2003, at 9:30 a.m. The meeting will be held in Room 307 of the State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut. Visitors are advised to call the Office of Board Matters (860-713-6510) to confirm the meeting date and time.

***The Board Report*** is published monthly and is posted on the Department's Internet site (<http://www.state.ct.us/sde>). It provides a summary of matters considered by the State Board of Education at its regular monthly meetings. The Department welcomes comments and suggestions concerning the format and content of ***The Board Report***. Please submit your comments to Pamela V. Bergin, Office of the State Board of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 301, Hartford, CT 06106, or [pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us](mailto:pamela.bergin@po.state.ct.us).

