

New Haven Public Schools

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Superintendent

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON S.B. 1114, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING EDUCATION



Senator Gaffey, Rep. Fleischmann, Members of the Education Committee, I am New Haven Superintendent of Schools Dr. Reginald Mayo and I am here to speak on behalf of the Governor's budget recommendations regarding education.

With regard to S.B. 1114, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding Education, we want to make several points:

- **First, on education funding.** While I applaud the Governor's commitment to providing greater funding for Education Cost Sharing in our State, we find in reading this bill that the devil is in the details. The Governor has proposed an increase in education funding of 14.04%, while her proposed changes in the ECS formula would result in New Haven receiving only a 7.46% increase. There is a disparate, negative impact on the increases to poorer urban school districts – while the priority school district grant, meant to help the neediest districts, is phased out and ultimately eliminated. These are puzzling recommendations at a time when everyone is talking about the achievement gap. Leaving the existing formula in place would mean another \$8 million in ECS funding for New Haven, which we could use to bolster achievements. We are open to formula changes but the Governor's proposals do not adequately address the needs of cities.

Examples of the Governor's proposed changes to the ECS formula are:

- **Changing the State Guaranteed Wealth Level from 1.55 Times Median Town Wealth to 1.75 Median Town Wealth.**
 - This hurts the poorest towns and helps the richest towns.
- **Changing the foundation amount from \$5,891 to \$9,687.**
 - While this helps every town, based on percentages, it helps some towns like Stamford and Greenwich more than it helps towns like New Haven and Hartford.
- **Changing how a town's need student count is determined.**
 - It changes the percent of Limited English Proficient Students from 10% to 20%. Strangely, this helps towns like Avon and Simsbury while it hurts towns like New Haven and Hartford.
 - It removes the ¼ of Temporary Family Assistance count, removes the ¼ of mastery count and adds 21.89% of Free and Reduced Lunch counts. We are still evaluating these proposed changes.

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• **Our second point concerns interdistrict magnet schools.** Our school choice programs supervisor, Edward Linehan, is here with me and testified before you on this last week. Let me reiterate his comments: certain provisions of this bill undercut the intent and operation of the interdistrict host magnet program, for sending and receiving districts, as it is implemented in New Haven.

New Haven has the largest interdistrict magnet program in the state, with over 4,500 students enrolled in our 14 magnet schools. Nearly 1,500 of those students come from 26 suburban school districts to attend these schools. When the program is fully implemented and enrolled in the 2011-2012 school year, we expect to serve 2,400 students from outside New Haven out of a total of 6,850 students in our magnet schools.

We would generally support Sec. 11(c)(1) and Sec. 11(k) of the bill because they attempt to correct longstanding issues. There has been no increase in state support for magnet schools in nearly a decade and an increase in some form is necessary to maintain the effectiveness of our efforts in these schools. We would prefer to leave the current funding formula in place with an increase in the “foundation level” in the ECS formula. We have always supported “parental choice” within our district. We would modify this section by removing the word “participating” so that families from ALL districts would have the option of applying.

However, we do not support the provisions of Sec. 11(l) of the bill, which would dramatically reduce the support that the New Haven magnet schools would receive by 39.4% from the combination of magnet and ECS grants.

As Ed Linehan testified last week, New Haven would no longer be able to “host” suburban students as it currently does. It would become necessary for suburban school districts to pay tuition to compensate for the loss of state support. Using the 2006-2007 school year as a practical example, this would result in a total of **\$7,048,555 in tuition charges** to our 26 current sending school districts. **The tuition charge would need to be \$4,756.11 per student.**

The resulting tuition charge to each town is indicated on the following table:

S.B. 1114 Governor's Budget Recommendations Tuition Implications for Suburban School Districts Participating In New Haven Interdistrict Magnet Schools Based on October 1, 2006 Enrollment

Town / School District	# of Students	Tuition Rate	Total Tuition
Ansonia Public Schools	137	\$4,756.11	\$651,587
Amity Public Schools - Reg. #5	13	\$4,756.11	\$61,829
Beacon Falls Public Schools	1	\$4,756.11	\$4,756
Bethany Public Schools	3	\$4,756.11	\$14,268
Branford Public Schools	33	\$4,756.11	\$156,952
Cheshire Public Schools	6	\$4,756.11	\$28,537
Clinton Public Schools	10	\$4,756.11	\$47,561
Derby Public Schools	58	\$4,756.11	\$275,854
East Haven Public Schools	127	\$4,756.11	\$604,026
Guilford Public Schools	8	\$4,756.11	\$38,049
Hamden Public Schools	324	\$4,756.11	\$1,540,980
Madison Public Schools	2	\$4,756.11	\$9,512
Meriden Public Schools	2	\$4,756.11	\$9,512
Milford Public Schools	33	\$4,756.11	\$156,952
Naugatuck Public Schools	8	\$4,756.11	\$38,049
North Branford Public Schools	26	\$4,756.11	\$123,659
North Haven Public Schools	18	\$4,756.11	\$85,610
Orange Public Schools	1	\$4,756.11	\$4,756
Oxford Public Schools	12	\$4,756.11	\$57,073
Seymour Public Schools	11	\$4,756.11	\$52,317
Shelton Public Schools	13	\$4,756.11	\$61,829
Stratford Public Schools	6	\$4,756.11	\$28,537
Wallingford Public Schools	24	\$4,756.11	\$114,147
Waterbury Public Schools	2	\$4,756.11	\$9,512
West Haven Public Schools	603	\$4,756.11	\$2,867,934
Westbrook Public Schools	1	\$4,756.11	\$4,756
Totals	1482		\$7,048,555

New Haven would support leaving the current funding formula in place for "Host Model" magnet schools with the following provisions:

- a. That the current Foundation Level in the ECS calculation be significantly increased; and,
- b. That students residing in the "Host" district of an interdistrict magnet schools not operated by a regional educational service center continue to be counted as (1) resident students for purposes of subdivision (22) of section 10-262f, and (2) in the determination of average daily membership pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of section 10-261.

• **Our third point concerns accountability.** We testified two weeks ago about similar accountability provisions in Raised Bill No. 7047, An Act Concerning School District Accountability. We appreciate the need for accountability but we believe you are missing a key piece. We strongly urge that any state funding or resources for low performing schools be targeted to instructional strategies that ARE working. We are alarmed by some of the provisions in this bill that would take control of failing schools out of the realm of the local public school district altogether. The bill as it stands does not acknowledge growth at individual schools, and yet, in New Haven, we have seen academic improvements in some of the most needy schools.

It is our strong belief that the state has a responsibility to use results-based accountability, as we have in our school system, to understand what strategies have worked in schools, and then to increase investment in those areas.

We are very pleased to report to this committee that our bilingual students have made tremendous process. In fourth grade math, we have virtually closed the achievement gap between regular education and ELL students and we have seen gains at other grade levels for our English Language Learners.

Other schools on the state's watch list have made progress. For example, Katherine Brennan School in West Rock made impressive gains on the CMT in all three subject areas at the fourth grade – reading, writing and math. The school increased the percentage of fourth graders proficient in reading by 22% and the percentage proficient in writing by 34%. Another school, King/Robinson, also on the list of low performers, made tremendous gains at all grade levels.

What made the difference for these schools? Effective instructional leadership, effective coaching support for teachers and the personnel needed to deliver “just in time” interventions for students, such as paraprofessionals and tutors.

The use of instructional coaches, in particular, is helping our teachers to improve instruction and deserves to be expanded. Currently, New Haven has 31 literacy coaches and 7 math coaches in our elementary and middle schools. Ideally, two literacy coaches and one math coach at each of New Haven's K-8 and elementary/middle schools would be a solid investment. Also, an additional high school math coordinator and high school literacy coordinator would improve the ability of our teachers use data to improve instruction and student learning.

In addition, while we have paraprofessional coverage in all kindergarten and first grades, the stringent requirements of No Child Left Behind resulted this year in the layoff of 76 paraprofessionals. We need the resources to increase our paraprofessional hires and to staff our second grade classrooms. Tutors for students, during and after the school day, additional guidance support for high schools and K-8 schools and the support of additional psychologists and social workers would help even more.

We favor a help team from the State, and certainly professional development is a key to success in our schools. We applaud excellence in our teachers and increased parental involvement. It is the extra intervention help that appears to be missing from the bill and from discussions about improvements in achievement.