

Testimony of Ellen W. Solek, Superintendent of Schools
East Haddam School District
Submitted to the Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 12, 2008

**RE: H.B. No. 5899: AN ACT CONCERNING ON LINE PROCUREMENT BY
REGIONAL AND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

My name is Ellen W. Solek. I am the Superintendent of Schools for the East Haddam School District. I currently serve in a small rural district of approximately 1450 students. The East Haddam community, like many other small rural CT communities, continues to struggle to meet the fiscal demands of a school district that is called to provide educational services at a very high level.

My purpose in addressing you today is to promote the need to revise the existing state procurement laws that will allow for the submission of electronic responses to public bids, thereby allowing the acquisition of supplies, materials, and services through the use of public funding and as described in **H.B. No. 5899**.

The East Haddam school district, in conjunction with the support of the East Haddam community, is in the process of constructing a new middle school for the town. Our anticipated completion date for the project is August of 2008 at an estimated total cost of 35 million dollars. Through the service of town and school district officials, Board of Education and community members, the district has formed a new construction Building Committee, whose purpose is to oversee the construction project, to scrutinize any and all expenditures needed for the project, and with significant help from our district Business Manager, to secure bids to various vendors for all required supplies and materials.

As an outcome of their collective diligence, the Building Committee is preparing to submit an initial draft of the Fixtures, Furniture, and Equipment (FF and E) budget to the Bureau of School Facilities for their review at a total projected amount of 1.8 million dollars.

It is my belief that had the Building Committee and our district personnel gained access to the benefits of the reverse auctioning process, a process available to numerous other school districts nation wide, that our opportunity to provide a 20% or greater savings to the taxpayers of East Haddam would have been possible. That equates to a total possible savings amount of \$360,000.00.

Secondly, our district's ability to exercise electronic bid submissions in the future could offer significant savings to the town and to the district with regard to substantial and costly capital improvements needed for school plant facilities that are already twenty-five to fifty years old.

On behalf of my Superintendent colleagues here today, I respectfully request that the legislature consider the possibility of a change to the current state procurement laws that will potentially offer significant fiscal relief to small CT districts already challenged by a limited tax base, coupled with today's high retail prices. In an era of high stakes testing and high expectations for 21st century educational excellence in CT, my colleagues and I ask for your consideration and for your collective support of our students and of our school communities.