



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
Submitted to the
Appropriations Committee**

February 11, 2009

**HB 6365 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30,
2011, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) appreciates the opportunity to offer our comments on the 2009-2011 state budget.

CABE commends the Governor for her effort to minimize the impact on local property taxpayers by maintaining major education grants at current levels. Needless to say, local education costs will increase in 2009-10, causing program reductions if there is an inability to increase local taxes. We are hopeful that funds in the Federal stimulus package may help districts fill this funding gap, if those funds supplement existing local and state funds.

Due to the recently passed Parent Choice legislation, the expansion of existing magnet school and the opening of new schools, tuition payments for many districts will dramatically increase. These facts also mean that we no longer have control over the number of local students that attend magnet schools, nor do we have a voice in setting the cost of tuitions. We urge you to make increases in the state subsidy for Open Choice students and full funding for magnet schools a priority.

We support the inclusion of incentives to support regional efficiencies. The services provided by the regional educational service centers, which include special education programs and joint purchasing, serve as an example of voluntary regionalism.

CABE opposes the provisions to reduce the school construction sliding scale reimbursement to 15 to 65%, and cap the annual grant commitment at \$450 million, which will unfairly impact those school districts about to undertake necessary school construction projects.

There are several issues that relate to state and local spending that we also urge you to address. CABE supports the proposal to increase the prevailing wage thresholds, which will serve to reduce the state and local cost for some bonded public projects in Connecticut. This increase is justified by the fact that the thresholds have not been raised in 18 years, despite mounting inflation. We also support the proposals to reduce educational mandates, particularly postponement of the in-school suspension requirement. We implore you to refrain from enacting any additional mandates on school boards during this legislative session. Let us all use this economic crisis as an opportunity to evaluate what works to support student achievement, and then focus on supporting those priorities.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.