STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
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Testimony Opposing House Bill Nos. 6686 and 6688

AN ACT CONCERNING THE TEACHER EDUCATION AND MENTORING PROGRAM AND
AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION GRANTS

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill No. 6686, An Act Concerning the Teacher Education and Mentoring Program and House Bill No. 6688, An Act Concerning Education Grants.

House Bill No. 6686 – An Act Concerning Teacher Education and Mentoring Program

This bill would implement the new Mentor Assistance Program that replaces the current BEST program in the Department of Education. In light of the recent report outlining the new program, I would consider supporting this new program, if funding to pay for the program can be identified. I cannot support the funding mechanism as outlined in the bill. The bill would create a new non-lapsing fund and provide funding of $4.4 million for the new program. If the non-lapsing funding is removed, and an alternative way of financing the program is found, I would be supportive of passage of this important bill that will provide teachers with needed mentorship in their first years of teaching.

House Bill No. 6688 – An Act Concerning Education Grants

This bill would make changes to the statutes regarding education grants that, during this economic crisis, would not be prudent because if implemented, they could increase state education costs.

The bill would change the calculation for the RESC operated magnet schools from the current 55% of the school's students from a single town to 60%. Available data suggests that between three and seven Magnet Schools may be affected by this change, which would allow them to retain the higher per student grant ($7,620 currently) rather than having the grant decrease to the host-operated level, which is currently $6,730. Without this proposed threshold

change the state may save between $1 million and $1.8 million in each year of the biennium.

This bill also retains the per student grant increases for FY2010 and FY2011 that the Governor had proposed to remain at the FY2009 level in her budget. If these increases remain in effect, it would cost the state an additional $7.9 million in FY10 and $16.9 million in FY11 over her proposed budget.

This bill would also create a three tier OPEN Choice grant program based on a district's participation level:

Participation Level	FY2010	FY2011
<= 2%	$3,000	$3,500
> 2% <3%	$4,000	$5,000
>= 3%	$6,000	$7,000

Based on available information, this change would cost the state an additional $3.2 million in FY10 and another $5.9 million in FY11. While I understand and appreciate how important this program is, especially in the Hartford region in order to meet the goals of the Sheff stipulated agreement; during this economic climate, it would not be prudent to increase this grant program.

I respectfully urge the Committee to modify HB 6686 and reject HB 6688. I would like to again thank the committee for the opportunity to present this written testimony and my staff and I are available to answer any questions you may have.