

Regional School Choice Office - Hartford



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Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

Hartford Public Schools thanks the Governor and Commissioner for recognizing the significant accomplishments of our district over the last two years. As you all know the ECS allocation is essential to our reform and any future changes can not be exchanged for less in ECS funding. Our district, based on its poverty and limited tax base, is more dependent on ECS and our future reform efforts are closely linked to that funding.

When reviewing Senate Bill 830, Hartford Public Schools asks you to consider the basic facts about Hartford Host Magnet Schools and remember that Hartford is, and has been, a willing ally of the State of Connecticut and the State Department of Education in meeting the goals of Sheff v. O'Neil. As we prepare for FY2009-2010, we are proud of our progress, excited about our schools, but also cautious that HPS will be forced to join CREC, and the other RESCs, in charging tuition for magnet schools that are not fully funded.

- Over 1,900 students from over 50 districts attend Hartford Host Magnet Schools. This makes the 10 schools the largest regional education network in the state.
- The greatest reason the State Department of Education met the 2008 goals for Sheff v. O'Neil was the compliance of three more Hartford Host Magnet Schools (Classical Magnet School, Sports and Medical Science Academy, Montessori Magnet at Annie Fisher)
- Capital Preparatory Magnet, Classical Magnet School, Sports and Medical Science Academy were named as Top 100 Schools by *US News and World Report*.
- Hartford Magnet Middle School is a *United States Department of Education Blue Ribbon School*.
- *Magnet Schools of America* named University of Hartford Magnet School of Science and Engineering as a 2008 School of Distinction. In April 2009, MSA will give the same honor to four more Hartford Host Magnet Schools.

Despite the success there are significant issues present:

- During FY2008-2009, the Hartford Public Schools will use nearly \$3M of general budget funds to offset the transportation of suburban students into Hartford. This figure is expected to rise even higher in FY 2009-2010 without full funding of magnet school transportation. Hartford can not be expected to take away education resources from Hartford resident students to fund bussing suburban students.
- Under the current legislation, found in Section 10-264, subsection c, there is a funding gap between the State Department of Education per pupil allocation and the Net Current Expenditure Per Pupil. The proposed legislation found in SB 830 increases the gap for FY2009-2010. Hartford can not be expected to take education resources from its students to fund this gap.
- Without the full implementation of the recommendations from the Commissioner of Education the Hartford Public Schools will be forced to charge tuition of \$4,600 per pupil.

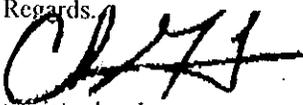
HPS encourages you to review the Legislative Proposal from Commissioner McQuillan and the State Board of Education dated December 8, 2008. HPS supports this plan with the funding to following the student. The State Department of Education document called for:

- 1) Have the per pupil grants for out-of-district students attending host magnets relate more directly to the cost of educating a magnet school student by basing the grant amount in part of the Department's published two-year prior Net Current Expenditures per Pupil (NCEP) average;
- 2) Have the full cost of in-district students be borne by the host district and eliminate the 25% reduction to the Education Cost sharing (ECS) grant the host districts' students that are in their own magnet schools
- 3) Specify that no tuition be charged for students to attend host magnets.
- 4) Amend the formula for operating grants for magnet schools operated by regional educational service centers (RESCs) by determining the cost to educate a magnet school student, as described above, and have the state pay a percentage of that cost with the balance of the costs borne fully by the sending districts through tuition.
- 5) Increase magnet school transportation grants by increasing the per pupil grant over a two-year period to more accurately reflect transportation costs being incurred by district.
- 6) Limit the annual budgets for magnet schools operated by RESCs to ensure reasonable tuitions for students attending these schools.

We urge the Committee on Education to take action and pass effective legislation that continues our reform. SB830 does not answer the problems and we ask that the Committee look to reform Sheff magnet funding.

We thank you in advance for all time, consideration, and the continued support for our reform efforts.

Regards,



Christopher Leone
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