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**THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**TESTIMONY**  
of the  
**CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES**  
to the  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

March 23, 2009

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local governments - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 93% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

***CCM supports Raised Senate Bill 1142 "An Act Concerning Relief of State Mandates on School Districts"***

Among other things, this proposal would (1) delay the implementation date of the in-school suspensions mandate until 07/01/11; (2) change, from May to April, the deadline by which local districts have to inform teachers their contract will not be renewed; (3) eliminates or reduces certain reporting requirements to the state Department of Education with which local school districts must comply; (4) clarifies that the burden of proof lies with the party requesting a special education hearing; and (5) stipulates that local boards of education are only responsible for special education services until a child turns 21.

During these tough economic times it is important that as many mandates as possible be lifted from local governments. The delay, or preferably repeal, of the in-school suspensions mandate alone would provide significant relief to local school districts. Public Act 07-66, *which requires schools to do in-school suspensions* unless a student poses a threat or danger to other students or faculty, as reported by municipalities, through CCM, carries costs associated with this mandate for staffing, administrative and facilities that would deplete already limited education funding. A delay in the implementation date will provide municipalities an immediate savings on costs associated with housing such students on-site during their suspension periods and allow municipalities more time to implement a long-term plan for meeting the intent of the law. CCM has estimated that implementing the mandate would cost towns and cities from \$9,000 per year (small town) to \$4.5 million per year (city). The average cost per student is approximately \$197.

This mandate should not just be delayed, it should be repealed unless full state funding is provided for it. At the very least, the Committee should clarify that the purpose of the postponement is to secure state funding to reimburse towns and cities for costs associated with the mandate.

The other mandate relief provided for in this bill will also be helpful to the local government bottom line. For example, delaying by one month the date by which teachers must be informed of possible layoffs will allow better coordination between such notices and local budget processes.

CCM's unfunded mandates report "How To Spell Relief" provides a menu of relief options that have been identified time and again by state and local leader as burdensome and costly to local governments. Attached to this testimony is an excerpt from this report, analysis' from the City of Bristol and the Town of Monroe specifically outlining current education mandates with which local governments must comply. While local officials don't dispute the merit of some of these mandates, collectively they substantially increase the overall costs of providing education services on the local level.

According to the U.S. Census, Connecticut's towns and cities bear a larger financial burden for public education than do municipalities in any other state. The cost for public primary and secondary education across the state for the current school year will exceed \$9 billion, and municipal property taxpayers already will:

- Finance approximately 54% of that amount (\$4.9 billion).
- Pay about 64¢ of every \$1 raised in property taxes toward K-12 public education.
- Pay for at least \$840 million (56%) of the State's \$1.5 billion in special education costs.
- Pick-up the bill for numerous other state-mandated education priorities that are not fully funded by the State.

Any state action to relieve municipalities from the plethora of unfunded and partially funded state mandates - either by repealing, reforming, or funding them - will be welcome relief for local governments and their property taxpayers.

CCM encourages the committee to carefully review the attached analyses' of state mandates on local governments, include some additional relief in this bill, and favorably report it.

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If you have any questions, please contact Kachina Walsh-Weaver, Senior Legislative Associate of  
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