

TOWN OF SPRAGUE

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First Selectman

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TO: Education Committee Members
FROM: Catherine Osten, First Selectman, Town Of Sprague

**RE: Governor's Bill 830 "An Act Concerning the Governor's Recommendations
Regarding Education"**

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee. My name is Cathy Osten and I am the First Selectwoman for the Town of Sprague.

Thank you for providing a public hearing on this bill which would implement certain portions of the Governor's proposed biennial budget by, among other things, level funding the Education Cost Sharing grant, postponing the effective date for the in-school suspension mandate, and capping education grants at the level of appropriation.

The current economic crisis has put a major burden on state and local governments to meet the needs of their residents continue to fund needed programs, and still balance the bottom line. The Governor's proposal to flat-fund major education grants is critical to avoid additional layoffs and cuts in education programs, and inevitably increased property taxes to make up for the short falls. It is important to remember that flat-funding of major education grants will not help municipalities to even keep up with inflation, but it is far better then cuts in funding.

Please also note that the capping of many key grants, such as Special Education, as proposed in this bill only serves to shift costs for these programs to local governments. A large portion of local education budgets is comprised of meeting state and federal mandates, a reduction in funding from the state will have to be made up by increases in local property taxes.

This bill would also delay implementation of Public Act 07-66, *which requires schools to do in-school suspensions*. As reported by municipalities, through CCM, the costs associated with this mandate for staffing, administrative and facilities would further strain already limited education funding.

The Town of Sprague has had no out of school suspensions in the last year, this was accomplished on a voluntary basis within the resources of the Town. However forcing municipalities into this program will place undo stress on already burdened school systems.

A delay in the implementation date will provide municipalities an immediate savings on costs associated 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.

If you should have any questions, I will be happy to answer them for you now or in the future.

Thank you.

Catherine Osten

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First Selectman
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