



**Testimony of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns**

**Presented to Education Committee**

**of the Connecticut General Assembly**

**March 23, 2009**

- **SB-1142 - AN ACT CONCERNING RELIEF OF STATE MANDATES ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) *strongly supports* SB-1142, which will delay the implementation of the in-school suspension mandate until July 1, 2011.

Although well intentioned, the mandate requiring towns to use in-school suspension to discipline students for all but the most egregious violations imposes a costly burden on small towns, which must make space available and hire additional staff to monitor students in in-school suspension. In addition, the mandate undermines the ability of towns to develop disciplinary standards that make sense for their schools and their community. This legislation appears to have been passed in response to a handful of communities with high out-of-school suspension rates. However, there is no evidence that in-school suspensions are more effective in disciplining students than out-of-school suspensions. At a time when towns are bracing themselves for additional cuts in state education aid, it makes sense to repeal this costly mandate.

COST also supports the other provisions in the bill which will provide some mandate relief to towns by reducing paperwork requirements and changing certain notification requirements. Unfunded mandates continue to drive up local costs beyond the control of our small towns and cities. In this uncertain economy, municipalities are experiencing staggering financial difficulties. Any additional unfunded mandates imposed by the state, however well-intentioned, will force increases in property taxes and cuts to other local services and programs. A three-year mandate moratorium would provide towns and cities with some breathing room to prepare and budget for the difficult road ahead.