

Written testimony in reference to HB5117 and SB1121
Submitted April 5, 2011

Honorable members of the Appropriations Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to address, through the public hearings on HB5117 and SB1121, the matter of the MBR (Minimum Budget Requirement) for Education.

As detailed in Substitute Bill No. 6385, referencing Sec. 18 Section 10-262i of the General Statutes, the following language has been substituted:

(e) For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2010, and June 30, 2011, the budgeted appropriation for education shall be no less than the budgeted appropriation for education for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, minus any reductions made pursuant to section 19 of public act 09-1 of the June 19 special session, except that for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, those districts with a number of resident students for the school year commencing July 1, 2009, that is lower than such district's number of resident students for the school year commencing July 1, 2008, may reduce such district's budgeted appropriation for education by the difference in number of resident students for such school years multiplied by three thousand.

(f) For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2012, and June 30, 2013, the budgeted appropriation for education shall be no less than the budgeted appropriation for education for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, plus any reductions made pursuant to section 19 of public act 09-1 of the June 19 special session, except that (1) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012, those districts with a number of resident students for the school year commencing July 1, 2011, that is lower than such district's number of resident students for the school year commencing July 1, 2010, may reduce such district's budgeted appropriation for education by the difference in number of resident students for such school years multiplied by three thousand, and (2) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, those districts with a number of resident students for the school year commencing July 1, 2012, that is lower than such district's number of resident students for the school year commencing July 1, 2011, may reduce such district's budgeted appropriation for education by the difference in number of resident students for such school years multiplied by three thousand.

The ramifications of the above sections for school districts can be devastating. School districts work on an economy of scale. Losing 20 students throughout a district will not result in 1 less classroom, 1 less teacher, 1 less bus, less utilities... Certainly nowhere to cut costs equaling the \$60,000 this legislation would require the district to cover.

A district could lose 30 regular education students, while gaining 20 special ed students-a net loss of 10 students, with the likely result being an INCREASE in costs due to the nature of expenses for special education. Yet this bill would allow a municipality to decrease education funding by \$30,000, despite the reality of increased costs. This is of particular concern for urban districts that host the largest populations of special needs students, as well as bilingual students, who also require special programming.

While student counts are based upon Oct. numbers, at any point in the year, those numbers can change-increase or decrease. Again, this is a common issue for urban districts who experience population fluctuations due to the transience of their population. It is not unheard of for a district to have larger student counts in Jan. than were posted at the October counts. Should districts receive mid-year funds if population increases? What if a district in 2012 exceeds their student count for 2011? Will the municipality then be required to ADD \$3000 per additional student beyond the 2011 count? Where is that balance in this legislation?

Where did the \$3000 figure come from? What study was done to arrive at that as an appropriate amount? What statistical data pointed to that amount as fair and equitable to every one of the school districts in CT, every municipality in CT?

Any such legislation should be the result of serious and thorough research of district trends relating to not just student numbers, but also the make up of the student body and its independent needs. This cannot be one size fits all. Each district has unique needs. Each municipality has unique resources and challenges. Fixing a single dollar amount to apply to every student in CT is a horribly flawed response to the request from municipalities for relief from the MBR. No such adjustment should be made without intense conversations that include municipal and education officials. The original MBR language, minus the passage relating to reductions based on student count, maintains a minimum of flat funding for municipalities as expended in 2009, the same flat funding scheduled for the ECS grant. School districts will face immense financial challenges even with flat funding-cutting beyond that will have devastating consequences.

Remove the stipulated decrease in municipal funding for education for decreased student count, and leave the original MBR language intact.

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