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Testimony in support of SB #1195 -
An Act Concerning School Finance Reform
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In the spring of 1949, my great uncle, Noel Field, was taken as a political prisoner by Stalin's secret service. He was held in a clandestine prison in Hungary for 5 years. The one thing he could count on during his internment was the continuous brutal treatment he received at the hands of his captors. According to reliable sources, he was tortured everyday for the five long years of his imprisonment.

I grew up hearing stories about Noel. I often wondered how he was able to survive such harsh treatment. My grandmother always said it was his education that saved him; his ability to use his imagination to elevate himself out of his dire circumstances. She told us that his family knew the importance of a good education, insisting that all of their children attend college. A gifted student, Noel got his undergraduate degree from Harvard in two years, going on to work in the State Department.

As a result of this experience, my family also insisted that we, my sisters and I, make the most of our educational opportunities. What was ingrained in us was the understanding that the one thing no one could take away from us was our education. All those lessons, once learned, were forever ours.

Fast forward to today, to testifying in support of Senate Bill # 1195. As a fervent believer in quality public education and as a parent of three children, I know that we need to make education reform a real priority. Living in Waterbury, I know first hand that a huge disparity exists between the education received by the children in our city versus the education afforded to those in the surrounding suburbs. As a parent, when I have to start thinking about moving to the suburbs so my children will have access to the quality education they deserve and the support that they need, I know there's a problem.

If we truly believe that every child is entitled to a great education regardless of where the child goes to school, then we need to do whatever we can to correct the financial disparity that currently plagues our cities and towns.

Schools in the poorest areas cannot be expected to perform on par with wealthier communities if they do not have the funds. Common sense should dictate that, and yet our outdated, non transparent and inequitable way of dispersing funds, continues.

The fix is simple. Choose to support financial reform for education that would:

- 1) make school funding consistent and equitable
- 2) provide additional monies for students with extra learning needs
- 3) allow funding to follow the student to whatever public school is chosen
- 4) create transparent and efficient financial accounting

The education in Waterbury, as well as in other locations around our state, is a far cry from the excellent public education I received as a child. Right now we have an opportunity to improve the current situation. Now is the time to act. We *need* to start acting like education is the most important legacy we can give to the next generation, and, we *need* to start legislating for education reform as if our children's lives depend on it. I encourage you to pass Senate Bill 1195, as it would go a long way toward fixing some of the deep problems in our public schools.