

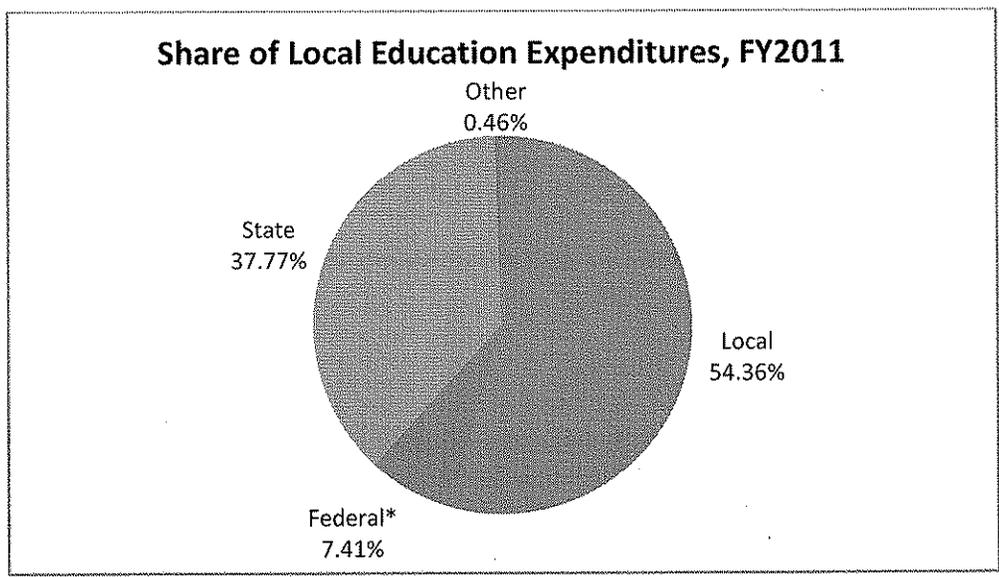


**TESTIMONY**  
of the  
**CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES**  
to the  
**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
March 24, 2011

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 90% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

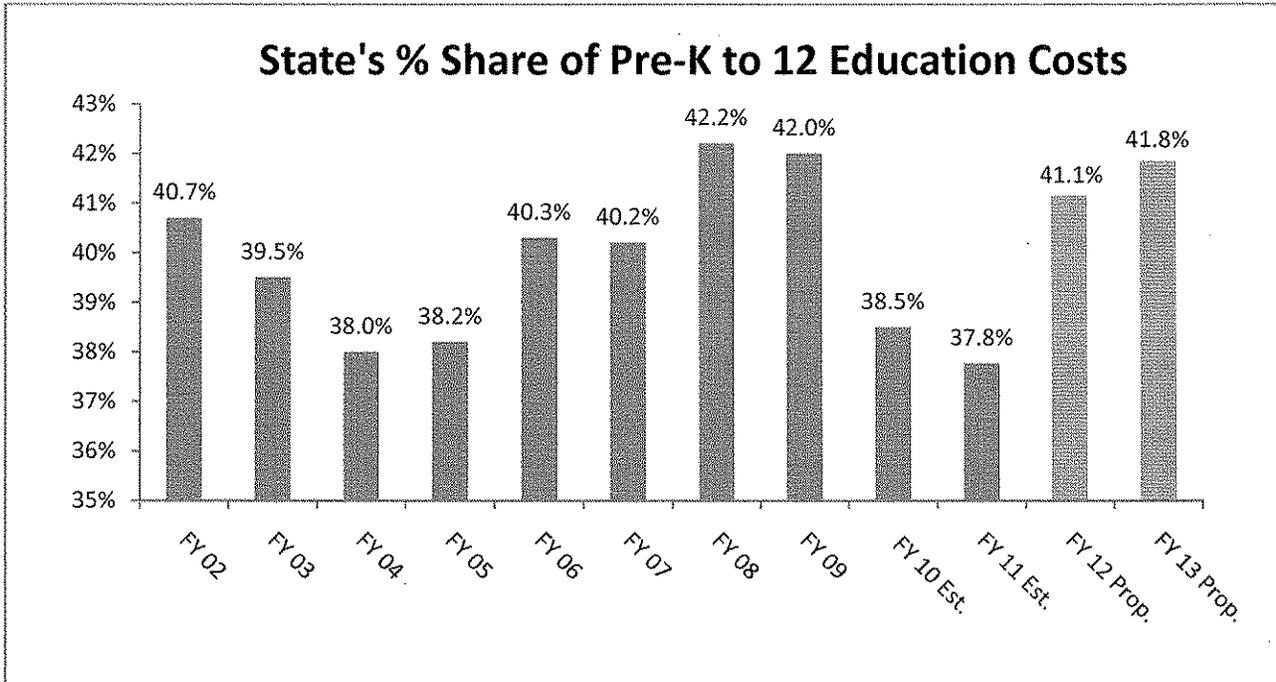
**CCM opposes Raised House Bill 1195 "An Act Concerning School Finance Reform."**

This bill would radically change the way the State funds local public education by instituting a new "money follows the child" approach.



Source: State Department of Education; CCM calculations

Against the backdrop of the State significantly underfunding K-12 public education – *ECS has been level funded the last two years and special education the last three years* – it would be detrimental to the viability of local schools if the State were to move forward now with a change in the funding formula for education.



Note: State funds include all state revenues on behalf of public elementary and secondary education, including state grants, bond funds, and department expenditures - including the Connecticut Technical High School System, teacher's retirement costs, and unified school district expenditures.

\*In FY10 and FY11, ECS was partially funded by federal ARRA funds (\$540 million). Those funds are proposed to be replaced by new state funding in the biennium.

Source: Governor's FY12-FY13 Budget Proposal; CCM, February 2011

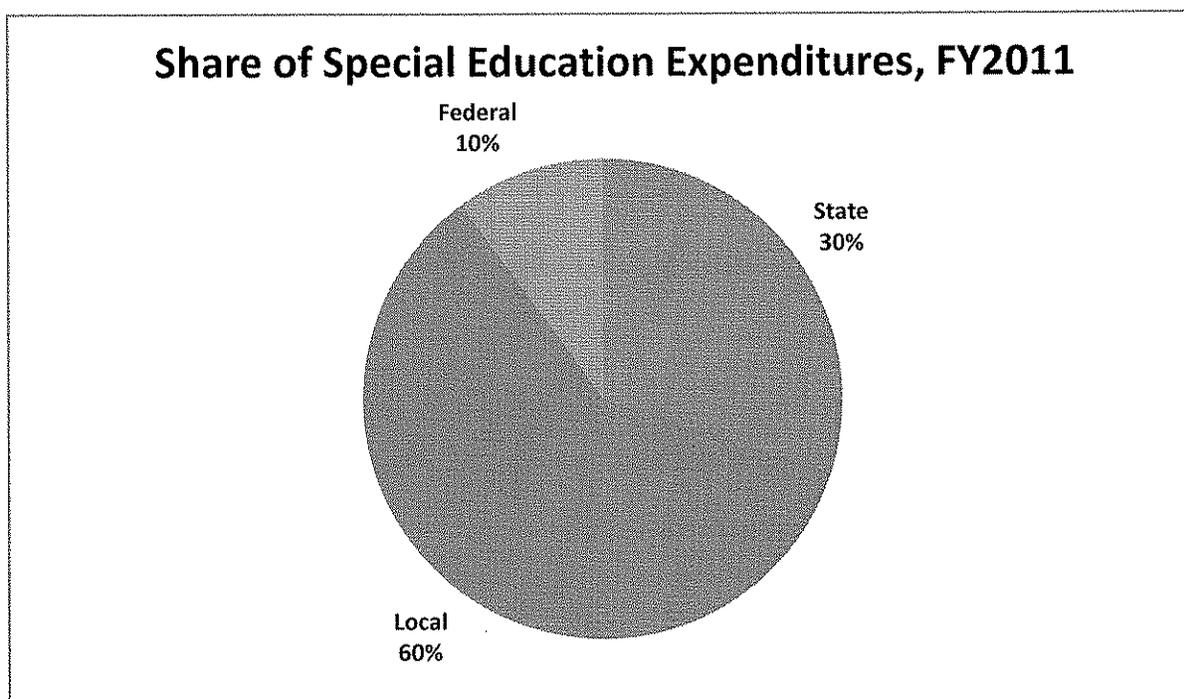
**The cost for K-12 public education across the state for the current school year is \$10.4 billion.**

Municipal property taxpayers will:

- Finance **54.4 percent** of that amount (at least \$5.7 billion). The State contributes an estimated **37.8 percent** and the federal government 7.4 percent. The rest comes from private sources.
- Pay about **\$0.64 of every \$1.00 raised in property taxes** toward K-12 public education.
- Pay for at least **60 percent** of Connecticut's over \$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.

**Remember: The ECS grant for FY2011 is underfunded by \$700 million. This underfunding has contributed to budget chaos at the local level, program cuts and teacher layoffs.**

**With special education expenditures surpassing the \$1.5 billion mark, the local share is almost \$1 billion.** Special education spending accounts for almost 15 percent of all education spending in Connecticut and costs keep growing faster than other school spending (5-6% vs. 3-4%). Complicating matters, unforeseen demands for the most expensive special education services too often result in local mid-year budget shuffling, supplementary appropriations, and other extraordinary measures. This is particularly true in smaller towns where the arrival of a single new high cost special education student during the school year can create a budget crisis.



Source: State Department of Education; CCM calculations

In light of the **Governor's proposed task force** to review the ECS grant formula and how education dollars are distributed across the state - *and* - **an active court case against the State by the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding**, it does not make sense to move forward at this time with H.B. 1195 until all factors can be carefully and critically examined.

Also, the literature is mixed as to whether or not "choice" schools are more successful than traditional schools.

It is important that any proposal not further starve our traditional schools of funding, thus punishing the traditional school student in favor of diverting resources to unproven "choice" schools. **Remember: Traditional schools educate 92% of Connecticut's public school students.**

Please see the attached CCM public policy report, "The State-Local Partnership for Education: An Unbalanced Relationship" for more information.

CCM urges the committee to take no action on H.B. 1995 and instead allow the Governor's task force to convene and make recommendations.

## ## ##

If you have any questions, please contact Jim Finley, CCM Executive Director and CEO, at [jfinley@ccm-ct.org](mailto:jfinley@ccm-ct.org) or (203) 804-6895, or Kachina Walsh-Weaver, CCM Senior Legislative Associate, at [kweaver@ccm-ct.org](mailto:kweaver@ccm-ct.org) or (203) 710-9525.

Attachment