



**CGA Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing March 24, 2011  
SB 1195 AAC School Finance Reform  
Comments Submitted by Katherine Wilson, School Finance Specialist**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to comment today in opposition to SB 1195, An Act Concerning School Finance Reform.

This bill would reshape the way education is funded in Connecticut, primarily by revamping the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant, which currently provides approximately \$1.9 billion in aid to municipalities, about 78% of the funds they receive from the state in support of local public elementary and secondary education. It would alter the variables that go into the ECS formula, the way those variables are determined, their operation within the formula, and the mechanism for determining both the state share of funding and how funds are distributed among towns. It would also require school districts to contribute significantly to the cost of educating students who leave their home districts to participate in the Open Choice program or to attend magnet and charter schools.

The League believes such drastic changes to such an important grant deserve more thorough, more broad-based, and more public study than this proposal—raised only eight days ago—has received. We prefer the approach taken in HB 6385, AA Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education, which establishes a task force representing key stakeholders and including school finance experts to study issues relating to the ECS formula and other means of state funding for education. This task force would report back to the governor by January, 2012, allowing enough time both to be thorough and to implement changes by FY '14, as contemplated in SB 1195. We hope the task force's work will lead to a revised aid formula that –

- is based on the latest and best research regarding the factors that influence the cost of educating children of all backgrounds and needs,
- reflects the relative ability of different communities to finance schools from local resources,
- fully funds through grants to towns 50% of the overall statewide cost of local public elementary and secondary education.

While the League supports targeted additional grants directed at raising the level of achievement in communities with concentrations of children who are especially costly to educate, we also hope that a new, properly designed and funded aid formula will serve to minimize the number of such grants.

Thank you for allowing us to share our ideas with you today on this important legislation.