

**TESTIMONY FOR THE LEGISLATURE’S APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**H.B. NO 6380: AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING 6/30/11**

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The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) which represents all of the superintendents of schools in CT along with many members of school districts’ central office staffs has the following positions regarding the aspects of the state’s budget for Fiscal Year 2012 that impact public education.

- CAPSS strongly supports the Governor’s proposal to flat fund the Education Cost Sharing Grant (ECS) for the next two fiscal years. Anything less than flat funding of ECS would result in 2011-2012 and 2012-13 school system budgets that would noticeably reduce the quality of public education programs for children across the state.
- CAPSS strongly supports the enactment of a Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) that ensures that in light of flat funding of ECS a municipality cannot decrease its school system budget for the next two fiscal years. Without such an MBR, ECS funds could be diverted to meet non-educational purposes at the local level and the basic purpose for the ECS program would be thwarted
- CAPSS supports the Governor’s recommendation to flat fund the Excess Cost Grant for the next two fiscal years. Excess special education costs are virtually impossible for school districts to control so decreasing the state level of support in this area would result in a transfer of funds at the local level from programs for the vast majority of students to meet the needs of the very few students who require expensive special education programs.
- CAPSS supports the Governor’s recommendation to increase funding for pre-school programming. It will be impossible for CT’s public education system to make substantial progress towards eliminating the achievement gap between poor children and children who are not poor and towards eliminating the global achievement gap that applies to just about every CT child, if we continue to wait until too many children are five years old before we begin their formal schooling.
- CAPSS supports the Governor’s recommendation to increase funding for the Open Choice Program. The financial incentives that would be provided by this increase would serve to provide more children with schooling in a racially integrated environment.

- CAPSS supports the Governor's recommendation to fund the establishment of a data system that will track student achievement in such a way that it can be integrated with the evaluation of teachers, principals and superintendents. Without such a data system, it will be impossible to establish an evaluation system that accurately evaluates the performance of these educators.
- CAPSS supports the Governor's recommendation to convene a high level study group for the purpose of recommending needed revisions in the system whereby the state funds its public education system. From the perspectives of equity, adequacy and sustainability, the present funding system has serious shortcomings that have been apparent for some time.
- CAPSS supports the Governor's recommendation that the integration of the state's vocational education system with local public education systems and/or regional education service centers (RESCS) be given consideration. While a poorly designed and implemented integration process would be detrimental to the students presently being served by the vocational education system and would impose a serious financial hardship on local school systems and/or RESCS, a well designed and implemented integration could not only continue to serve well the students who are presently enrolled in the system but also open up opportunities for students who are not being presently served and who would benefit greatly from being served and do this in a financially sustainable way for local systems and RESCS.
- CAPSS supports the Governor's recommendation to resolve the budget deficit situation by balancing expenditure reductions with revenue increases. Attempting to resolve the deficit situation solely by virtue of expenditure reductions would deprive the citizens of the state of needed government services in the education field and beyond.
- CAPSS does not support a reduction in the Pupil Transportation Grant. Pupil transportation is a state mandate. Reducing funding for that mandate would require school systems to divert funds from educational programs to meet the mandate.
- CAPSS does not support a reduction in the Priority School District Grant. The districts affected by this reduction are the ones that are the most challenged when it comes to increasing student achievement. It is difficult, therefore, to reconcile a reduction in this program with a goal of reducing the achievement gap.
- CAPSS suggests that the funds needed to level fund Pupil Transportation and Priority Districts be found by eliminating funding for secondary school reform and revising the deadlines for the implementation of this program and by reducing the appropriations for magnet and charter schools. Secondary school reform while needed along with the transformation of the entire schooling system, has a lower priority in the immediate future than keeping school systems as financially whole as possible. Magnet schools

while valuable are not as effective an integration mechanism as the Open Choice Program. Increasing funding for state charter schools which would serve a relatively small percentage of CT's children even at the increased level that is being recommended is difficult to justify when funding for the education of the vast majority of CT's children is being flat funded at best.

Thank you for considering these positions. I would be happy to discuss any and all of this with you directly.

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*"The mission of CAPSS is to lead the continuous improvement of public education for all students by advocating public policy for children, and by developing and supporting executive school leaders"*