



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

81 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109-1242 - (860) 571-7446 - Fax (860) 571-7452 - Email admin@cabe.org

**Testimony
Submitted to the
Appropriations Committee**

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SB 1195 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL FINANCE REFORM

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education strongly opposes SB 1195, An Act Concerning School Finance Reform. This proposal is premature, since the implementation of a new finance system requires careful analysis and deliberation. We support Governor Malloy's proposal to establish a commission charged with recommending reform of school funding.

Our current system of school finance has become piecemeal and inconsistent. Funding for traditional public school programs, vocational technical schools, vocational agricultural schools, magnet schools, Open Choice and charters must be examined and included in a consistent funding system. The bill before you leaves many questions unanswered. It postpones a decision about the foundation level, a key element of a school funding formula, and leaves it to the State Department of Education to determine "adequate" funding. The time for "simulations to predict the financial impact of the phase-in of the education formula" is before legislation is adopted – not after, as provided in the bill. It also fails to address funding for the technical schools and regional agricultural schools.

In addition to the unanswered questions, several provisions in this bill exacerbate the burdens already placed on local school districts. While "money follows the child" may sound reasonable, it would in fact have a serious detrimental impact on the educational programs available to students whose families make a different choice – to stay in their traditional local school setting. The loss of small numbers of students in each grade results in no savings to the district – but would result in a significant loss of resources. Any new funding formula must honor that choice and insure adequate education programs just as much as it honors the choice to attend magnet, charter, Open Choice, technical and regional agricultural programs. The bill also weakens the minimum budget requirement – the only element that insures that state support for education benefits the students. The funding system proposed in this bill is far more complex than our existing funding system – which has often been the subject of criticism for that very reason.

We strongly urge you to reject SB 1195, and support a process to provide for the development of a comprehensive school finance system that provides adequate funding for all students.