



TESTIMONY
of the
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
to the
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 7, 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 SB 1103 "*An Act Concerning Early Childhood Education*", which would mandate pre-kindergarten in all towns effective July 1, 2011.

While some additional funding is being offered, in no way could we expect that it would fully cover the large costs associated with implementing such a mandate. **Many of the cost drivers for local school districts are a result of unfunded and partially funded state and federal mandates.** The list of mandates is large - and growing - and complying with them is a daunting task under any circumstance, but even more so given the current economic and fiscal environment.

Bristol Public Schools did an analysis of the cost of mandates on their district. It estimated that complying with these mandates cost the district almost \$15 million. Information on the mandates and their associated costs can be found in the attachment.

Another worthy but unfunded proposal, Public Act 10-111 imposed new graduation and other requirements on local school districts - which, according to the Office of Fiscal Analysis will cost local school districts an estimated \$12 to \$18 million. While the hope was that the State would receive funds from the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) program, the reality is that the state was not awarded these funds, and this unfunded mandate now fully lies on the backs of local property taxpayers - unless it is repealed or funded by the state. Of course it is important for education results to improve - but a new multi-million dollar mandate is absurd when the State is already underfunding existing education programs

In Connecticut, the State's share of public elementary and secondary education costs is too low. According to the U.S. Census, Connecticut's towns and cities contribute a larger portion of funds for public education than do municipalities in all but one other state - and that portion is

growing. The **cost for public education** across the state for the current school year exceeds **\$10.4 billion**. Municipal property taxpayers already:

- 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.

The State, which has chronically cutback its funding commitments for K-12 public education, instead forces municipalities by the MBR and other mandates to pay for the State's underfunding through even higher property taxes. No wonder Connecticut is the most reliant state in the nation on property taxes to fund K-12 public education.

In fact, the general government side of municipalities in Connecticut has shrunk in size over the last decade due to chronic state underfunding and the need to transfer scarce local resources to the always increasing education side of local budgets.

CCM urges this committee to ***oppose*** this bill and ***take no action*** on it.

Thank you for your consideration.

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