



Testimony
Bart Russell, Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST)
Before the Education Committee
March 5, 2012

RE: SB-298, AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) *supports the intent of SB-298*, which recognizes that there are concerns regarding the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) and directs the state Department of Education to study these issues. However, COST firmly believes that legislation should move forward this year to allow towns to reduce spending below the minimum budget requirement where they have been able to achieve demonstrated cost savings.

Connecticut's small towns and cities are committed to providing a high quality education for their students. To address escalating costs and flat funding of municipal aid without jeopardizing the quality of education, many school districts are aggressively pursuing cost saving measures, such as participating in consortiums to purchase oil and gas, revamping bus routes to reduce transportation costs; and utilizing technology to reduce paper and printing costs.

Towns and school districts are also exploring options to reduce costs by sharing certain functions, such as building and grounds maintenance and information technology support. Unfortunately, the MBR undermines such efforts because towns do not have any flexibility under MBR to reflect such cost savings in the education budget, putting additional pressure on property taxpayers.

We therefore urge your support for revisions to SB-298 which will authorize towns to reduce their MBR to reflect cost savings. Revising the MBR in this manner will provide a powerful incentive to towns and school districts to craft budgets to reflect cost savings and reduce the burden on local property taxpayers.