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Testimony
In Support of S.B.298
An Act Concerning the Minimum Budget Requirement
Education Committee
March 5, 2012

Good afternoon Chairman Stillman, Chairman Fleischmann, Ranking Members Boucher and Giuliano, and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to testify on S.B. No. 298 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT. Currently written as a study bill, I hope the committee will see fit to pass a bill this year that will ease the burden of this mandate on our municipalities.

The MBR represents one of the more costly unfunded state education mandates on municipalities. It essentially prevents municipalities from enacting cost savings that might be achieved in local school budgets through regionalization, employee concessions, the reduction of costs, or any other efficiency. Last session, the General Assembly recognized the burden of a strict MBR by allowing towns whose school districts had fewer students enrolled than in the previous school year to reduce their MBRs for FY 12 or FY 13 by $ 3000 times the enrollment reduction. However, the total reduction in either year cannot exceed 0.5% of the prior year's budget appropriation, and towns that are in need of improvement, or with poverty rates above 10%, cannot reduce its MBR. I do not believe we went far enough.

I urge the committee to amend SB 298 to eliminate the MBR, and let our municipalities seek efficiencies that may reduce their education budgets, while keeping the requirement that all state funds for education must be spent on education.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.
Sincerely,

Kevin Witkos
State Senator, 8th District