



# CCM 2012 Testimony

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## *EDUCATION COMMITTEE*

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The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (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 the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

CCM opposes the following bills, which would create new unfunded state mandates on towns and cities:

- **House Bill 5349** *“An Act Concerning the Inclusion of CPR and EAD Training in the Public School Curriculum.”*
- **Senate Bill 304** *“An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Labor History in the Public School Curriculum.”*
- **Senate Bill 210** *“An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Personal Financial Management in the Public School Curriculum.”*
- **House Bill 5354** *“An Act Concerning Athletic Directors and Incorporating Physical Activity into the School Day.”*
- **House Bill 5348** *“An Act Concerning School Nurses and School Medical Advisors.”*
- **House Bill 5350** *“An Act Concerning Achieving Universal Literacy by Grade Three.”*

Understand that CCM is not taking issue with the policy goals that these bills represent, rather we must clearly point out that **each one of these bills would add yet another unfunded state mandate** on school time, school curriculum, school staffing, and school resources.

These bills do not even have a fiscal note yet, therefore leaving at question what each proposal will cost towns and cities to implement. Not to mention that what is blatantly missing from each proposal is a clear mechanism for state funding of these new mandates. Each year new curriculum mandates are proposed. Absent relief from other curriculum mandates, at what point will additional hours have to be added to the school day in order to accommodate each and every one?

Even with the proposed one-time increase in ECS, there is significantly inadequate state funding to local governments to meet the costs of the hundreds of existing mandates on towns and cities and school districts.

And, on top of that, some districts (those in most need) stand to lose some of their ECS funding under S.B. 24. Such “conditional” districts will, starting in FY 14, have to apply for funding and show progress before getting aid that was previously an entitlement.

**Connecticut is the most reliant state in the nation on property taxes to fund Pre K-12 public education.**

*CCM remains surprised that the business lobby is silent on the need to reduce the reliance on property taxes to fund Pre K-12 public education.* The property tax is the largest and fastest growing tax on businesses in Connecticut.

*CCM also remains surprised that organizations representing boards of education, school superintendents, school business officials, charter school advocates (who are supporting a new mandate in S.B. 24 to have school districts that have been chronically underfunded by the State subsidize state charter schools by \$1000 per pupil), and others remain silent on the need to reduce the reliance on property taxes to fund Pre K-12 public education.* In the end, these groups are more than willing to use the MBR to force hard-pressed property taxpayers to make up for state underfunding of public education.

*As a result, the burden of the most regressive tax in Connecticut - the property tax - continues to increase, and non-education municipal services needs (public safety, elderly and youth services, road and bridge repair, recreation, etc.) go underfunded or unmet.*

**CCM reiterates its position that comprehensive education reform must include education finance reform to ensure that education is financed adequately and equitably by the State so that (1) every student, no matter where they live in our state, has the opportunity to achieve educational excellence, and (2) residential and business property taxpayers are not unfairly burdened by the costs of Pre K-12 public education. Until such task is undertaken, adding more layers of well-intentioned but unfunded mandates on already burdened local districts is unfair and shortsighted.**



If you have any questions, please contact Jim Finley ([jfinley@ccm-ct.org](mailto:jfinley@ccm-ct.org)), Executive Director and CEO, George Rafael ([grafael@ccm-ct.org](mailto:grafael@ccm-ct.org)), Senior Government Finance Analyst, or Kachina Walsh-Weaver ([kweaver@ccm-ct.org](mailto:kweaver@ccm-ct.org)), Senior Legislative Associate of CCM via email or via phone at 203-498-3000.