

Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee

February 22, 2012

GOVERNOR'S BILL SB NO. 24: AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL
COMPETITIVENESS

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleishmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Dr. Craig Edmondson, and I serve as the Executive Director of Area Cooperative Educational Services, ACES serving the twenty-five districts in South Central Connecticut.

I am submitting testimony today on Governor's Bill SB No.24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness. I recognize and appreciate the work of the General Assembly during these unprecedented times of fiscal challenges and I thank you for the work you do.

I am here in support of the Governor's proposal to increase the magnet school subsidy for schools located outside of the capitol region.

This funding is essential for the sustainability of high quality magnet schools in our entire state. Continued and adequate support for magnet schools is important to the voluntary desegregation efforts begun in response to the needs outlined in Sheff v. O'Neill. Although specific to the Greater Hartford region, the Department of Education's programs established in response to the original Sheff decision, allowed school districts across the state to voluntarily enter into agreements that created more than fifty exciting opportunities for learning for students throughout our state, three in which ACES is the RESC operator on behalf of our partner districts.

These magnet schools have earned strong support from the families and students who have enrolled in them and from the communities where they are located. Over time, magnet schools have also demonstrated improved student achievement, while bringing students together across district lines

to reduce racial, ethnic and socio-economic isolation – the identified goals in Sheff v. O’Neil. Without the proper funding the state has transformed a voluntary effort into an unfunded mandate at a time when urban and suburban school districts throughout Connecticut struggle to find the financial resources to meet the obligations for their own schools.

Being outside of the Capitol region, I am concerned that with the enormous obligation to meet the requirements of the Sheff stipulated agreement, historically, legislators have been compelled and required to differentiate funding levels because of available funds, I ask that this practice not continue.

We appreciate the Governor recognizing the disparity of funding levels across our different regions and applaud his recommendation to begin to fix this problem. I do ask however that on behalf of my region that all magnet schools state-wide are treated equally with equal subsidy in any new formula recommended and approved by this committee.