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## TOWN OF EASTFORD

Testimony on Senate Bill 24: An Act Concerning Educational Competiveness

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleishmann, and members of the Education Committee

The Board of Selectmen of the town of Eastford would like to provide testimony against Section 11 of Senate Bill #24: An Act Concerning Educational Competiveness. This section of the proposed bill intends to incentivize small district consolidation and would penalize small towns, like Eastford, by decreasing the state education aid for small school districts with per pupil costs exceeding the state average.

Eastford is a rural northeast town of 1,759 citizens. We have approximately 233 students, 160 students attending Eastford Elementary School and 73 high school students who attend high school in neighboring towns. Eastford's children benefit from the small size of Eastford Elementary School; our children receive a quality education and they do well on Connecticut Mastery Tests.

The residents of Eastford have a strong sense of community. In 2009, citizens of Eastford participated in a community conversation which considered the option of developing a regional school with a neighboring town. Almost universally, the participants agreed there is a great value in continuing to maintain the small elementary school in town. Citizens agreed that it is the small school, small class size, attention from teachers and administrators, and regular interaction with parents that has made Eastford students successful. Parents expressed concerns about the potential loss of control and oversight and potential decrease in the quality of education that could result from a regionalized school. Bigger is not always better. They were also concerned about potential increased costs of transportation and the increased time children would spend on the buses.

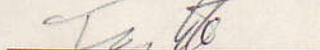
The town of Eastford appreciates and relies on the state Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) grant. It benefits both the children and the taxpayers of this small rural town. Alternatives to reductions of the ECS such as reforms to the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) might enable small towns, like Eastford, to find additional cost savings and efficiencies while maintaining quality educational standards.

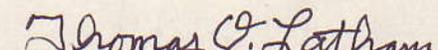
Penalizing small towns for investing in the education of our children is not the answer.

Thank you for considering removing the penalty or assessment sections of Section 11 of Senate Bill 24: An Act Concerning Educational Competiveness.

Signed in Eastford Connecticut on February 21, 2012

  
Allan E. Platt,  
First Selectman

  
Terry Cote,  
Selectwoman

  
Thomas O. Latham,  
Selectman