



Comments Presented to the Joint Appropriations Committee

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Like many states, Connecticut requires school districts to group its spending into broad categories, but this kind of presentation does very little to help parents and other stakeholders understand whether their school district is using its resources in a productive way. For example, referencing the states CEDaR system, what exactly counts as "improvement of instruction and educational media services"? Are the students more technologically savvy, because of these investments?

Connecticut would benefit greatly from developing a system that shows relationship between spending and student performance. The state already requires each district to report on school and student performance, factors that put students at-risk, and school resources. Soon, schools and districts will be required to use a uniform system of accounting. A performance-based financial reporting system is simply the next step.

Connecticut spends approximately \$9.9 billion annually on K-12 education, but currently lacks the ability to determine whether these funds are being used in a manner that contributes to high academic achievement and cost-effective operations.¹

The establishment of a performance-based financial system will advance the understanding of Connecticut's school district leaders and policymakers alike in determining the costs and benefits associated with particular policies and practices within their public school system.

More, this type of system is a necessary continuation and advancement of previously passed legislation which requires the Department of Education to implement a uniform chart of accounts for school revenues and expenditures and make this information publically available.

This kind of transparency leads to a different level of accountability for our schools. It allows parents to understand if one district puts more money into the classroom than another, and what that yields for student outcomes. And it allows district and state leaders to identify who is spending wisely, whether funding levels are adequate, and how to replicate best

practices for all students in the state. Some states have even gone so far as to appoint new financial managers when districts prove that they are not using their resources wisely. This is what Connecticut should aspire to.

Any parent or taxpayer ought to be able to easily access and understand a school district's budget, how it compares to other district spending, and how much money is being spent on which programs that yield outcomes for their students. That's important not just for government transparency, but for ensuring that our precious education dollars are being used in ways that best serve our kids and help improve student achievement.

Thank you.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics. (2008-2009) Total Expenditures for Elementary and Secondary Education. Data taken from the Common Core Data National Public Education Finance Survey. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/stateprofiles/sresult.asp?mode=short&s1=09>