Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

81 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109-1242 - (860) 571-7446

Testimony
Submitted to the
Appropriations Committee
February 24, 2014

HB 5030 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015.

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education appreciates the opportunity to address the Governor's budget proposal.

HB 5030, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year June 30, 2015, continues to demonstrate the Governor's support for education, despite the state's fiscal constraints. CABE appreciates the support of the Governor and the Legislature to provide increases in education funding during the past 3 years, making Connecticut one of only a few states to do so. The economic challenges are faced at all levels of government, and felt most intensely at the local level during the current budget development and adoption season. Rising local costs, in addition to the increased expectations and related costs for implementation of Common Core State Standards, educator evaluation and support, and secondary school reform, will likely exceed the increases in the education cost sharing grant in all districts. For the Alliance Districts, the increase in ECS funding again comes with a requirement that the funds be expanded pursuant to a plan approved by the Commissioner. We urge you to insure that these districts have the flexibility to include support for existing initiatives in their plans.

The continuation of the cap on the special education excess cost grant, which was designed as the safety net for local school districts facing extraordinary individual student special education costs, creates fiscal uncertainty at the local level. Increasingly districts must reduce services to regular education students to fund the special education mandates. We urge you to make every effort to remove this cap. Delivery of these targeted services does decrease the offerings in the general education budget in a detrimental way. We are encouraged that the MORE Commission is studying special education.

CABE applauds the creation of the Office of Early Childhood. It recognizes the partnership of community based and public school programs as well as more resources for educators. Additional resources for early childhood programs will allow many more young children to be better prepared as they enter kindergarten and greatly enhances their opportunities as lifelong learners. This programing will also help to decrease the achievement gap at its inception.

CABE strongly supports the Governor's proposal to provide a second round of grants for school safety and security alterations. Many districts, after consultation with local emergency officials, have identified areas of needed improvement, but lack the resources to implement these changes.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.