



# CCM 2014 Testimony

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## ***EDUCATION COMMITTEE***

March 17, 2014

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 92% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

### **HB 5565, "An Act Concerning the Minimum Budget Requirement"**

This legislation would make certain revisions to the Minimum Budget Requirement that do not take all issues into consideration. However, it's not enacting meaningful MBR mandates relief.

Let's be clear - ***every community in Connecticut spends more on K-12 public education than they receive in state funding from the State.*** Statements to the contrary are false and serve only to muddy the issue rather than help to address it.

The imposition of the MBR mandate over the past years has meant that no matter what efficiencies have been found in board of education budgets, the budgets cannot be reduced. In an era in which every other state and local agency are having their budgets closely examined, one entity – boards of education – have been beyond effective scrutiny and shielded from taxpayer control. Connecticut, on the state and local level, continues to grapple with the current tough economic climate. Exempting any part of government from being reviewed for efficiencies and savings is inappropriate.

**K-12 public education costs approach 80% of most municipal budgets in our state yet, the MBR has historically placed the biggest chunk of the municipal budget beyond the democratic control of the people. Elected municipal appropriating authorities and taxpayers currently have no say over the minimum funding level for education services in their town or city.**

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

The general government side of municipalities in Connecticut has shrunk in size over the last decade and transfers scarce local resources to the always increasing education side of local budgets.

Modest adjustments to the MBR made in recent years were steps in the right direction. However, Connecticut's property taxpayers need bolder moves:

- Increase the amount that school districts with lower enrollment can reduce expenditures from the current \$3,000 per pupil to \$5,000 per pupil or 40 percent of net current expenditures per pupil.
- Increase the total allowable reduction for all expenditures from 0.5 percent to 1.0 percent.
- Clarify that towns and cities can be credited for in-kind services such as building maintenance, snow removal, etc., when calculating the MBR.

Now is the time for serious MBR relief-- and HB 5565 does not provide that.

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If you have any questions, please contact Chelsey Worth at [cworth@ccm-ct.org](mailto:cworth@ccm-ct.org) or (203) 470-5214.