

From: Maryellen Donnelly, Member, Hampton Board of Education  
Sent: Friday, March 14, 2014  
To: Education Committee  
Subject: Public Hearing Testimony-HB 5565  
An Act Concerning the Minimum Budget Requirement

Thank you Chair Fleischmann and Chair Stillman and members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to share my support for House Bill 5565.

I am Maryellen Donnelly and a member of the Hampton Board of Education. The Hampton school district is comprised of one Pre-K through sixth grade school. Regional School District 11 serves our students in grades seven through twelve along with students from two other school districts.

I strongly support HB 5565 and will relate what happened in Hampton to illustrate why I do.

Last spring, the Regional District 11 budget passed prior to that of the Hampton school district. Because Hampton had an increase in the proportion of students it sent to RD 11, it had an increase in its share of the regional budget. Current statute allows the Minimum Budget Requirement to be determined on a district *or a town* basis. The scenario was set. Calculating a *town-wide* MBR, Hampton's district budget could be lowered the amount that the town of Hampton would pay toward the regional budget.

After several referenda, after the start of the current school year, voters passed a budget for the district of Hampton that is 5.5% lower than last year. I believe that our current budget is deficient; in fact, the cuts that the Hampton Board of Education had to make are devastating. We decreased spending on heating oil, books, instructional supplies, the cafeteria, and business and paraprofessional staff, as well as reducing teachers' time, and thus direct instruction, in reading, technology, library/media, art, music, and guidance.

What occurred next is remarkable. A number of citizens donated money and within a few months, much, but not all, of teachers' time was restored. It is understood that the donations are not part of Hampton's budget and are not expected to occur in the future.

As you know, elementary school districts and regional high schools serve students in many Connecticut towns and those students rely on the districts working together to provide continuity. Under current MBR statute, our budgets are set in opposition and voters like me who strongly support education wonder how supporting one budget will hurt another. The proposed changes in MBR will allow each district to retain staff and commit to multi-year projects and programs.

I respectfully request that you support House Bill 5565:

- To provide predictable budgets, determine MBR solely on a district basis.
- To provide adequate budgets going forward, set MBR at levels using district budgets for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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