



State of Connecticut

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Testimony Opposing Governor’s Bill [HB-6824](#)

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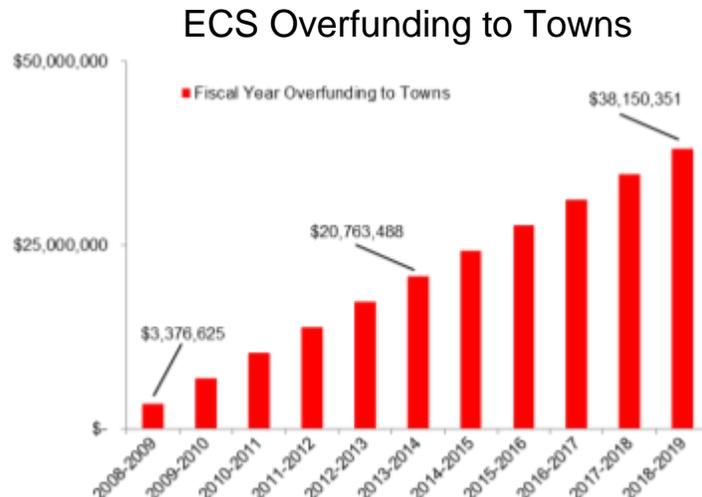
Orlando J. Rodriguez
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 Appropriations Committee
 Public Hearing for Elementary & Secondary Education
 March 3rd, 2015
 Hartford, CT

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Orlando Rodriguez and I am an Associate Legislative Analysis with the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). With direction from its board, LPRAC opposes Governor’s bill **HB-6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE**, which would have disproportionately negative consequences for Latino children and families throughout Connecticut.

In particular, we oppose the ongoing overfunding of the Education Cost Sharing Grant (ECS) for select towns. Based on the most recently updated ECS calculations, 50 towns are currently “overfunded.”ⁱ These select towns are receiving more ECS grant monies than calculated for their maximum ECS amount. In total, approximately **\$21 million** in ECS monies were overfunded to select towns in both FY 2014 and FY 2015. This bill continues the yearly overfunding even when the state is facing a budget deficient of over \$1 billion in the next fiscal year.ⁱⁱ

This **extra** ECS money for select towns is not helping the majority of Latino students in Connecticut as none of the overfunded towns has a significant Latino population. In fact, the state underfunds ECS grants to towns with large Latino populations by tens of millions of dollars every year.

ECS overfunding started in FY 2008 through FY 2010 when there were significant increases in the ECS budget and **all** towns received more monies - even if they were already getting their ECS maximum amount.ⁱⁱⁱ In FY 2009, overfunding totaled



approximately \$3 million.^{iv} Since then, yearly overfunding has continued to grow because changing socioeconomics among our towns is not reflected in what the legislature appropriates for ECS. The ECS formula corrects for these changing socioeconomics, but we do not enact funding reductions to match the ECS calculations.

For example, a town does not have their ECS funding reduced even when their student enrollment has declined and the wealth of town residents has increased. If the current trend continues, overfunding will reach \$38 million annually in FY 2019. From FY 2009 to FY 2019, there will be a 10-year cumulative total of **\$228 million** in overfunding.

This is a good time to correct ECS overfunding exactly because it is a difficult budget year. For overfunded towns, reduce ECS funding to their **maximum** amount and reallocate the overfunded \$21 million equally to bilingual education and special education, which are both gravely underfunded. Furthermore, this increased funding for bilingual education and special education will benefit all towns – even those that will lose their overfunded ECS monies.

We are in this difficult political situation because of a lack of transparency for K-12 education spending. Connecticut taxpayers will be appalled to learn that this level of misallocation of K-12 education funds is occurring. ECS overfunding will not go away if we just ignore it. It will only get much worse.

LPRAC thanks this committee for addressing this politically sensitive issue and encourages its members to eliminate permanently ECS overfunding in FY 16 and beyond.

ⁱ Orlando Rodriguez, LPRAC Memorandum Re: Towns Receiving ECS funding above their ECS target amount (overfunding); 27feb2015

ⁱⁱ ECS funding for FY 2015 was the same as is proposed for FY 2016 and FY 2017.

ⁱⁱⁱ Orlando Rodriguez, Nov. 2011, [Presentation to ECS Task Force](#)

^{iv} Orlando Rodriguez, Feb. 2011, [Problems with Connecticut's Education Cost Sharing Grant](#)