

My name is Bill Davenport, and I am the director of the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology Program at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury, and I have been an agriscience teacher there for my entire career for 29 years. I am here to testify regarding **Bill Number 6824, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION.**

I fully understand the economic situation in Connecticut and how tight money is. However, when money is allocated for increases for Connecticut's School choice programs, I need to bring to everyone's attention that once again, the proposed increases to these programs are FAR from equitable. In the Governor's proposed budget, Magnets get 36 million more, Charters get 19.9 million more, Open Choice schools get 11.9 million, yet Agriscience programs, which are currently funded at a level that is less than ONE THIRD of magnets and charters, are only scheduled for 32,000 more (that was thousand, not million..) Agriscience programs currently receive only 3,190 per student state support, while magnets average close to 10,000 per student and charters are over 10,000 per student, and Votech programs are over 12,000 per student. Yet magnets and charters got a combined 56 million in increases while ag programs got 32,000, again, **thousand.....**

Two years ago, I served on the Governor's Task Force for Education funding and I spent two years and 26 meetings with 12 other members on this work. When the task force as created, the act specifically required the task force to focus on the Education Cost Sharing formula with consideration to state grants to interdistrict magnet schools, regional agricultural science and technology education centers. Obviously, the inequity of funding for agriscience programs as obvious to all or else it wouldn't have been specifically listed in the charge, and thus the task force was charged with studying it and fixing it.

So this isn't just Bill Davenport working hard to bring this to everyone's attention (I've been doing that for 29 years), this is an inequity that finally got noticed enough to be included in the task force's charge.

One of the recommendations of the task force was to fix this problem once and for all by funding regional ag programs equally with regional magnets. In order for this to happen, a phase in plan for 3 million more per year for 4 years was recommended to accomplish this goal of equal funding between ag and regional magnets.

Thanks to the appropriations committee and the legislature, most of the first two years of increases was added in during the past two years. **However, in order to fully implement the task force recommendations, 3.75**

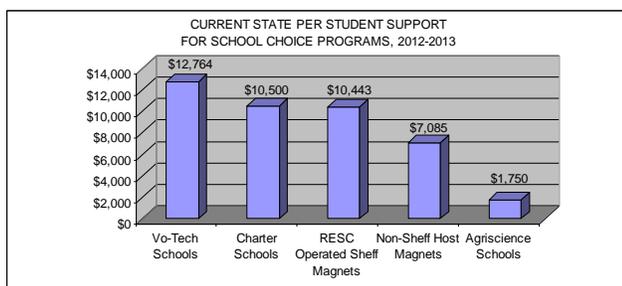
million more needs to be added for agriscience programs in 2015-2016 and the final 3.75 million needs to be added into the 2016-2017 year of the proposed budget.

So, I propose that if there are over 67 million new dollars earmarked for school choice program increases, **this money should be more equally allocated to all four school choice programs, to spread the wealth so all four school choice programs (Magnets, Charters, Open Choice and Agriscience) receive a fair portion of that increase.** Again, the agriscience programs are only asking for 3.75 million increase in each of the two years, **total of 7.5 million of this 67 million,** to fully implement the Governor’s Task Force recommendations for agriscience funding. **I challenge anyone to argue with me that is isn’t a justified request for a little more equity.**

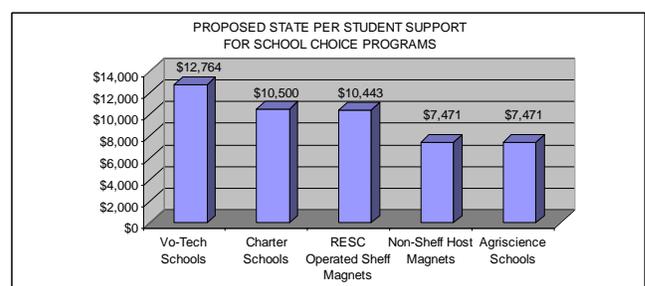
Connecticut’s 3.6 billion dollar agricultural industry is alive and thriving, with over 29,000 citizens employed in it, and hundreds of jobs available to our agriscience program graduates. Of all of the school choice programs, the ag programs are the only ones with a **direct impact on job growth in this state,** and I believe job growth is key to an improving economy for all of us. I can promise you that agriculture touches everyone’s lives: you all send flowers to people on Valentine’s day, you all bring your pets to a veterinarian, you all play golf or other sports outside on grass, you all enjoy hiking and visiting state and national parks, you all hire an arborist to take a tree down in your yard, or someone to mow your lawn, or build your walkway and patio, or enjoy visiting your local food farm stand in the summer, you all can’t wait to go to your local nursery to buy plants and shrubs to plant in your gardens and yards once you can see the ground again soon, and, most importantly, you all enjoy eating food on a daily basis. And I bet many in this room don’t even make the connection that the guy you hire to plow all of this snow we’ve gotten lately off your driveways are probably landscapers who provide snow removal as their livelihood in the off season from their agricultural based jobs as landscapers. Thank you!!!

ECS TASK FORCE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS

BEFORE



AFTER



REQUEST: To Fully Honor the Recommendations from the 2013 Governor's Task Force For State Education Funding

TASK FORCE CHARGE

Public Act 11-48, An Act Implementing Provisions of the Budget Concerning General Government, established a task force to study issues relating to state funding for education in the context of state constitutional requirements. The act specifically required the task force to focus on the Education Cost Sharing formula with consideration to state grants to interdistrict magnet schools, regional agricultural science and technology education centers, and funding issues relating to the cost of special education for the state and municipalities.

Specific Recommendations:

1. Provide a consistent and more equitable level of state support among school choice programs.
2. Fund non-Sheff host magnet school programs and regional agriscience programs equally by providing the following:
 - a. For In-District (host school) students, the state would provide a standard \$3,000 per student grant for each program.
 - b. For Out-of-District (sending town) students, use the state average regular program expenditures (RPE) plus 10% (to compensate for more expensive specialized programs) as the true cost, and the state would provide a grant for 2/3 of this amount for each out-of-district student attending these schools. Their sending towns would be responsible for paying tuition for the amount up to, but not to exceed, the difference between the average NCEP and the state's contribution.
3. Phase-in the increased state grants over four years at a rate of 3 million dollars more each year for 4 years.

PLAN	OUTCOME
a. 3 million in 2013-2014	(3 million was added in 2013-2014)
b. 3 million in 2014-2015	(3 million was proposed, but reduced to 1.5 million added in 2014-2015)
c. 3 million in 2015-2016	(3.75 million needs to be added in the 1 st year (2015-2016) of the new budget)
d. 3 million in 2016-2017	(3.75 million needs to be added in the 2 nd year (2016-2017) of the new budget)
<hr/>	<hr/>
12 million total	12 million total

BOTTOM LINE: To honor the task force recommendations, the total request is as follows:

\$3.75 million needs to be added in the 2015-2016 proposed new budget

\$3.75 million needs to be added in the 2016-2017 proposed new budget

NOTE: When specific language is drafted, any change in sending town tuition must only be done in the 2nd year for all schools to be able to budget for this change accordingly.