TO: Honorable Sen. Beth Bye and Rep. Toni Walker,
And the Members of the Appropriations Committee

Testimony in **FAVOR** of **SB816**

An Act Establishing a Minimum Level of Funding Under the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula

Thursday, April 2, 2015

A fair and equitable education for all children is one of the most important responsibilities we have and should not be taken lightly.

With respect to the ECS formula, there are currently 19 significantly underfunded towns throughout the state. These towns receive less than 50% of the amount required by the formula and Haddam is one of them.

These communities must either raise more tax revenue or go without, making it much harder to adequately fund both our schools and town government.

This unfair and inequitable system also indirectly pits municipalities against one another, creating winners and losers with a formula that is supposed to do the opposite by making the system equal and fair for all.

Specifically in Haddam, which at 42% is the **tenth worst funded** out of all 169 municipalities, we receive millions less per year than our neighboring towns. The direct effect of the unequal distribution of ECS funds makes it extremely hard to compete for businesses due to a higher mill rate and we go without when it comes to many necessary infrastructure maintenance and improvements to our schools and municipal properties.

When our biggest taxpayer Connecticut Yankee Nuclear Power Plant shut down permanently over 15 years ago, our grand list dropped dramatically but our ECS allocation was never adjusted upward for that loss. Haddam is being funded as if the power plant was still in operation.

Our children and residents should not be penalized when something beyond their control occurs that causes the grand list to drop so drastically and the ECS formula does not take that dramatic drop into account.

With the knowledge that the formula has complications, a fair place to start fixing the problem would be to fund the most underfunded communities up to the 50% mark.

This bill will be the first step in getting the ECS funding formula back on track and will show the people of Connecticut you truly intend to make the system fair once again.

Thank you for taking the time to discuss this important issue.

Sincerely,

Karen Biondi

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