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Statement of State Representative Brian S. Becker
In support of SB 816
An Act Establishing a Minimum Level of Funding under the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula
before the
Appropriations Committee
of the
Connecticut General Assembly
April 2, 2015

Chairman Walker, Chairman Bye, Ranking Member Ziobron, Ranking Member Kane, and the other distinguished members of the Appropriation Committee, thank you for raising Senate Bill 816, An Act Establishing a Minimum Level of Funding under the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula.

Education Cost Sharing (“ECS”) can be a complex subject. The basic formula has three parts, two of which have various subparts. It would take too long to sift through all of the provisions of the ECS formula at a public hearing and would likely put many in the hearing room to sleep. Accordingly, I will not try to do that.¹

Instead, I just want to emphasize the fact that the formula takes many factors into account including the WEALTH level of the town and NEED level of the students.² Accordingly, if Town A is wealthier than Town B and Town A’s students’ need level is the same or less than Town B’s students’ need level, then under the formula, Town A would receive fewer ECS dollars. This is as it should be and is already built into the formula.

To the extent that the state cannot afford to fully fund the ECS amount in any given budget, equity dictates that any reductions in ECS funding be shared equally. In other words, if we are only able to fund ECS at 75%, then each town should receive 75% of what it would otherwise be entitled to

¹ A detailed description of the ECS formula and its subparts can be found in OLR Report 2012-R-0101.

² Each town’s wealth is determined relative to other towns and each student from a low-income family who is eligible for federal assistance counts an extra 33% in determining student need and each limited-English-proficient student not participating in bilingual education programs counts an extra 15%.

under the formula (which, as previously stated, already accounts for differences in towns' wealth). This would be the fair approach.

In reality, cuts to ECS funding have not been shared equally. In fact, the percentage of ECS funding going to towns ranges from a high of 610% of target funding to a low of 22%.³ This wide disparity among towns is blatantly inequitable.

SB 816 does not cure the inequitable nature of our current ECS funding, but it is a step in the right direction. SB 816 would ensure that no town receives less than 50% of the amount called for under the ECS formula. While those towns would still be shortchanged relative to every other town in the state, we at least would be making a start towards righting the wrong that these towns have endured with respect to ECS funding.

Thank you for your consideration.

³ These figures were supplied by the Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission which, in turn, cites an official at the State Department of Education.