



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Testimony of State Representative Lonnie Reed on behalf of SB 816, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM LEVEL OF FUNDING UNDER THE EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANT FORMULA.

Good morning to the Honorable Committee Chairs Bye and Walker and to the esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is State Representative Lonnie Reed. I serve the 102nd District of Branford.

I am here today to testify in favor of SB 816, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM LEVEL OF FUNDING UNDER THE EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANT FORMULA. I am accompanied by our Superintendent of Schools, Hamlet Hernandez and our Board of Education Chairman Michael Krause.

As many know, Branford is a scenic shoreline community. And that presents us with a complicated image challenge – one that has worked against our longtime efforts to receive sufficient ECS funding to truly meet the mounting needs of our school children. According to current data, Branford is the 7th most adversely impacted community for ECS funding.

We are truly proud of the growing diversity our community has experienced over the last several years. More than 40 languages are spoken in our district. And in the classrooms that means large numbers of English Language Learners. And every year many students arrive who are performing at well below grade level. Not surprisingly, they require considerable extra attention both inside and outside of school.

Twenty-five percent of our children are eligible for free and reduced meals and many teachers and administrators believe that figure seriously under-represents the real and rising need we have in Branford. Last year, our Summer Meals Program served more than 9,000 meals during the summer months to ensure that our children were not going without.

Branford Taxpayers are, of course, footing most of these costs and given our ever-increasing demographic of Senior Citizens on fixed incomes, many of them struggling to meet their own needs, the situation is moving towards unsustainable.

Our Teachers and Administrators and School Board Members are working hard to deliver the best education possible to all of our children. Our diversity is our strength and a fair share of ECS funding would certainly help Branford's school children achieve their full potential. That is an obligation and an opportunity that none of us can afford to squander. Thank you.