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Winifred Hamilton, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools

**Dr. Winifred Hamilton, Superintendent, Stamford Public Schools
Testimony for the Appropriations Committee
Connecticut State Legislature
April 2, 2015**

Madam Chairwoman/Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Dr. Winifred Hamilton, Superintendent, Stamford Public Schools and am here to support Senate Bill 816-
“An Act Establishing a minimum level of funding under the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant formula.”
In particular, I wish to promote the continuation of the Alliance Grant program.

One part of the ECS program allocates dollars directly to cities. A second and relatively new addition is the Alliance grant program which allocates dollars directly to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). Today you are hearing testimony from many towns both about the inequity of the Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) grant formula as well as the underfunding of ECS targeted reimbursements. Stamford has maintained for many years that the ECS formula overstates the grand list and understates student need. Now we learn that Stamford receives only 52% of its ECS target.

As a result of the minimal state reimbursement through the ECS formula (Stamford receives only \$635 per student), Stamford’s education budget is disproportionately supported by local revenue – by more than 85%. The Alliance grant program initiated by Governor Malloy in the 2013-14 school year has mitigated, in part, flaws in ECS funding calculations. Let me add that Stamford receives the next to lowest Alliance allocation of towns in our District Reference Group (DRG).

Given the modest Alliance allocation to Stamford, I am proud to let you know that Stamford has used Alliance funds very successfully to support key initiatives in several areas: talents, interventions, college and career readiness, school culture and operations. I need to emphasize my support for its continuation.

Preschool: With Alliance funding we have added Summer School for incoming kindergartners and begun two full day Prek classes at each of our two Focus Schools. This effort is beginning to pay dividends with regard to leveling the play field for our students. As a distinctly heterogeneous school district some of our entering kindergartners are able to read while others have poorly developed vocabulary and serious knowledge deficits.

Interventions: With Alliance funding, we have supported literacy instruction for struggling elementary students during the school year and expanded Summer School to include grades K-3. Summer School has also been provided for high school students in need of credit recovery to enable them to graduate in four years.



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As a district with an 11% enrollment of English Language Learners (ELs), approximately 2,000 students representing 65 language groups, we are using Alliance funds to support professional development of classroom teachers in strategies to enable EL students to access core instruction.

College and Career Readiness: With Alliance funding we have supported AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) a middle and high school program to support students become “first generation” college attendees. At the high school level, Stamford has used Alliance funding to continue the successful Project Opening Doors (POD) program to increase participation in Advanced Placement courses, after an initial POD grant expired. Over the past five years, from 2010 to 2014, the percent of high school juniors and seniors participating in AP courses has increased from 41% to 51%; participation by Black and Hispanic students has doubled.

School Cultures: With Alliance funding we are addressing high school reform with particular emphasis on “personalizing” the high school experience through the creation of ninth grade teams and an Advisory program. Introduction of a well-researched tutorial program for struggling Algebra I students is beginning to demonstrate promise after years of experimenting with alternative solutions, with little or no success.

Operations: With Alliance funding, we are supporting the development of a revised Technology Plan, focused on teaching and learning as well as pilot programs in the high schools designed to develop students’ technology skills for the 21st century. The revised Technology Plan will also address technology for the online Smarter Assessment program.

Therefore, Madam Chairwoman/Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I implore you to continue Alliance grant funding as part of the ECS program beyond the initial five year period. In the absence of minimal ECS dollars, Alliance funds are enabling the Stamford school district to promote programs to prepare each and every student for higher education and success in the 21st century. Absent Alliance funds, the quality of educational programs for Stamford students will suffer.

Finally, as Alliance funds are only one part of the ECS reimbursement grant program, I speak for Stamford and all towns underfunded by ECS, in support of Senate Bill 816- “An Act Establishing a minimum level of funding under the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant formula.”