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**Testimony of Howard Thiery  
In Support of:**

**SB 816 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM LEVEL OF FUNDING UNDER  
THE EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANT FORMULA**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee; good day and thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 816, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM LEVEL OF FUNDING UNDER THE EDUCATION COST SHARING GRANT FORMULA.

My name is Howard Thiery and I am Superintendent of Schools in Regional School District 17, which is comprised of the towns of Haddam and Killingworth. The town of Haddam is one of only 19 towns that receive less than 50% of their calculated ECS allocation. Haddam receives just 43.67% of its calculated allocation and is the tenth most underfunded town in terms of percent. By contrast Killingworth, which is also a member of Regional School District 17, receives 86.62% of its calculated allocation. This disproportionality results in Haddam taxpayers bearing over \$420,000 more than Killingworth to send their students to the same school District. This inequity between Haddam and other communities is based on funding ratios that are outdated and on measures of community wealth and ability to pay that are no longer accurate. Between 2000 and 2013 the number of students and families with economic need, as measured by free and reduced lunch, has grown by 65% for the town of Haddam. At the same time the decommissioning of the Nuclear Power Plant in Haddam drastically decreased the town's tax base. Needs have increased while the tax base, wealth and ability to pay have decreased yet nothing has been done to adjust the state funding that is supposed to provide equity between towns.

Equity is the crux of this issue. It is widely acknowledged that the ECS formula is flawed and needs correction. This has made some leadership in the past hesitant to provide relief for communities like Haddam. The argument against relief has been, "it's broken for everyone, and we need to fix the formula." This is certainly true but I ask that you not sit idly by waiting until the ECS formula is fixed. The truth is that ECS is more flawed for some communities than others. Every year that Haddam receives this reduced

allocation, immeasurable damage is done to the property owners who are burdened with higher than their equitable share of education costs and to the town that cannot attract businesses for economic development due to unfavorable tax rates.

The children of Region 17 deserve an equitable education, and Haddam deserves equitable funding. SB 816 is an excellent first step toward providing relief to underfunded communities such as Haddam. At some point the ECS process may be fixed for everyone but in the meantime this bill provides a safety net for communities that each year are harmed by the inequitable distribution of state funds. Please support SB 816 as a solid start to help underfunded towns. Thank you for your consideration in listening to this testimony.