

---

**From:** kimt22  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 29, 2015 5:38 PM  
**To:** AppTestimony  
**Cc:** Sen. Linares, Art; Rep. Miller, Philip; mschlag@haddam.org  
**Subject:** ECS Grant Formula for Haddam, CT

Dear Senator Beth Bye, Representative Toni Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Bye, thank you for sponsoring bill SB816, requiring a 50% minimum level of funding for ECS for all towns. Please review the assumptions that are used in the formula that is currently used to determine the Education Cost Sharing Grant for Haddam, CT. The town of Haddam has been shortchanged severely since CT Yankee was decommissioned about 10 years ago causing our grand list to drop dramatically without any adjustment to the assumptions. Due to the fact that our funding from the state has not increased the town has had to raise taxes to make up for the loss of revenue from CT Yankee to fund our schools. Our current mill rate is 30.39 and is set to increase again this year. Our tax rate is deterring young families and businesses from moving into our town and is making it very difficult to sell a home.

Our school system is by far Haddam's biggest asset! I fear that if we don't start receiving additional and more equitable funding from the state that our school system and children will suffer. There is much pressure from the older population in town on a fixed income and from couples without children to make drastic changes including consolidating elementary schools as they are understandably tired of footing the bill to pay to educate our children. As you are aware, declining enrollment and birthrates in the state seem to be fueling the fire to consolidate in Haddam. Although our numbers in Haddam have declined, they have not declined enough to indicate that this is a reasonable solution. If we were to close one of our three elementary schools, there wouldn't be enough classrooms in the two remaining schools to house all of the students. Even if there were enough space this would still be an undesirable solution as average class size would be over 30 students. The issue of taxes and where and how money is spent on education has caused a great divide and animosity in our small community.

Our Board of Education runs a tight ship and has done everything they can to contain costs and yet our school budget is 75% of the town budget. They have been given the arduous task of balancing the needs of the students and the desires of the taxpayers to hold the line and cut spending. Over the last several years the board has approved a budget with a 0% increase and has still been met with great opposition. Unfortunately, this year there will need to be an increase, approximately 5%, due to a substantial increase in insurance costs and mandated student outplacement, even with the reduction of 23 staff members and other great programs. Our schools are under attack because we have been underfunded for far too long by a program that was meant to provide equity for all.

In addition, I just learned that Haddam is the 10th most underfunded ECS town out of all 169 municipalities and that we are only one of 19 towns that are funded below 50%.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Kim Thomas  
239 Silver Springs Drive

Higganum, CT 06441