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East Hartford Education Association
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Testimony of
Marcia Ferreira
Before the
Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee

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Re: HB 7054 AAC Keno

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, and members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee. My name is Marcia Ferreira. I am an elementary school teacher in East Hartford, where I serve as a math coach. I am also President of the East Hartford Teachers Association.

I am here today to testify on H.B. No. 7054 AAC Concerning Keno and the need for the state to generate sufficient revenue to fund East Hartford's schools.

As you may know, the State of Connecticut owes local towns about \$700 million in Education Cost Sharing funds that help pay for local schools. East Hartford is among the 119 underfunded towns that do not receive their full Education Cost Sharing Grant and is underfunded by \$19 million each year. I'd like to describe for you the impact locally of underfunding state funds to public education.

This underfunding significantly impacts our classrooms. In East Hartford, underfunding has meant too few social workers and teachers of ELL and special education. We have kindergarten and first grade classrooms without paraprofessionals. We have insufficient parent engagement resources. We teach in hallways and convert closets to offices. We have leaky roofs.

Too often, teachers in our system, and others, have to reach into our pockets to pay for furniture, easels, and bookcases. We buy paper, glue, crayons, pencils, and "extra things" like art supplies (paint, paint brushes, construction paper, poster board, project materials, etc.). We buy books and even subscriptions to digital resources to help our students. But it's not enough, and it's unfair to students, their families, and the educators who are working hard every day to make a difference and to make ends meet.

It seems that with respect to state funding for schools, the state is digging a deeper financial hole, making it harder for everyone to dig out of in the future. It is critical that the legislature and governor raise enough revenue to fund its obligation to Connecticut's school children. For far too long we have struggled to provide the education that we know all students deserve, and we need to know that our legislators are doing everything they can to continue making sure every school in Connecticut is the best school it can be. We need your support. We cannot continue to be asked to do more and more without the adequate resources to do so.

What the state doesn't pay also impacts local property taxes. The underfunding that is shortchanging students is shortchanging East Hartford taxpayers too. Something has to give.

I urge committee members to consider progressive and dependable ways to raise funds for local schools so the state can meet its constitutional obligation to East Hartford's school children, and every child in the state.

Marcia Ferreira
EHEA President