

*Rob Traber*  
*Before the*  
***Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee***

*April 15, 2015*

**Re: HB 7054 (Raised) An Act Concerning Keno**

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, and members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee. My name is Rob Traber and I am a resident of Bridgeport. I am also an elementary school teacher and the President of the Bridgeport Education Association. Before I became a Bridgeport teacher, I was a Bridgeport parent fighting for the resources that our schools need. My daughter, an old friend of Senator Moore and Representative Hennessey, graduated from Central High School in 2006.

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 Connecticut's schools. Bridgeport is among the 119 underfunded towns that do not receive their full Education Cost Sharing Grant (ECS). The State of Connecticut owes Bridgeport \$57.6 million just this year alone.

Our schools would also be heavily impacted by additional cuts proposed by the governor. The governor's proposed cuts to PILOT grants would drain nearly ½ a million dollars from the city and additional cuts to education will significantly impact services to children. In addition to ECS underfunding, the governor's proposed cuts to schools would cause the following:

1. Summer school will be cancelled, resulting in significant "summer learning loss"
2. Academic intervention for the most challenged students will be severely curtailed
3. Class sizes would average 29 students
4. After school tutoring will be curtailed and possibly eliminated
5. Curriculum development for the Common Core will be eliminated
6. The social and emotional services so needed by our students will be curtailed; the ratio of students to service provider, already beyond reasonable, will be increased
7. There will not be full time nurses in schools
8. High school electives will again be reduced
9. College courses for high school students will be significantly reduced
10. Technology upgrades would be halted – hardware and software purchases will be severely reduced

The city of Bridgeport is working to restore the vibrancy that attracted economic growth and development a century ago. It has made progress, but is still a city that cannot generate enough tax revenue to provide the kind of schools all children deserve. The state's financial role in our city is critical if we are to continue providing essential services to the people of Bridgeport.

Like many children across the state, Bridgeport's children face challenges associated with poverty and urban decay. Over 95% of our students live below the poverty level. Only with a continual state financial commitment can schools help children overcome the many obstacles they might face and provide them the opportunity to succeed that they deserve. Therefore it is critical that the legislature and governor raise enough revenue to fund its obligation to Connecticut's school children. Failure to do so means digging a deeper financial hole, making it harder for everyone to dig out of in the future.

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 provide substantially equal educational opportunity to the children of Bridgeport, and every child in the state.

Thanks you.